

AWAKE, THOU SLEEPER!

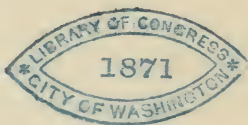
A SERIES OF

AWAKENING DISCOURSES.

BY THE LATE

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'GATHERED FRAGMENTS,' 'YOUNG DISCIPLE,'
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# CONTENTS.

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|                                                                            | Page. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| DISCOURSE I.                                                               |       |
| Unconverted Men are Asleep, . . . . .                                      | 5     |
| DISCOURSE II.                                                              |       |
| Unconverted Men must be Awakened, . . . . .                                | 30    |
| DISCOURSE III.                                                             |       |
| Importance of immediate attention to Religion, . . . . .                   | 50    |
| DISCOURSE IV.                                                              |       |
| The Absurdity, Danger, and Guilt of Procrastination in Religion, . . . . . | 74    |
| DISCOURSE V.                                                               |       |
| The Sinner must be convinced of Sin, . . . . .                             | 96    |
| DISCOURSE VI.                                                              |       |
| The Sinfulness of an Unconverted State, . . . . .                          | 118   |
| DISCOURSE VII.                                                             |       |
| Objections to the endless Punishment of the Wicked silenced, . . . . .     | 161   |
| DISCOURSE VIII.                                                            |       |
| How Sin is to be taken away, . . . . .                                     | 189   |
| DISCOURSE IX.                                                              |       |
| If Christ be rejected, there can be no Salvation, . . . . .                | 209   |
| DISCOURSE X.                                                               |       |
| The Freeness of the Gospel Salvation . . . . .                             | 226   |



# AWAKE, THOU SLEEPER!

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## DISCOURSE I.

UNCONVERTED MEN ARE ASLEEP.

“Awake thou that sleepest.”

EPH. v. 14.

IN the Series of Discourses which I commence this evening, my remarks will not be addressed so particularly to Christians, as to those who have hitherto neglected the things of religion—those who are not conscious to themselves that they have any evidence of a renewal of heart.

I wish to be permitted to speak to this portion of the congregation with great plainness and fidelity. Will you not grant me this favour?

I desire to place myself before you in the attitude of a friend, and to pour into your ear the warm convictions of my own heart in relation to your situation as the creatures of God, and as candidates for immortality.

I do most confidently believe, that if you will but patiently listen to me, and allow your sympathies in some degree to go along with me, while I endeavour

to hold up to your view the truth which God himself teaches in relation to your present condition and future prospects, you will be led to adopt the full and fixed determination that you will henceforth be on the Lord's side.

I have selected the text for the purpose of exhibiting the simple truth that all men, previous to spiritual regeneration, are in a state of insensibility from which they must be awakened before the gospel can bless or save them. The unwillingness men feel to believe this, is of itself a strong proof of its truth. I will endeavour to illustrate this remark.

Were one to knock at your door in the stillness of midnight, uttering the piercing cry, "that your house was on fire—that the flames were bursting from its roof—and that you must escape instantly, or perish," you would not listen to this unterrified and unconcerned: belief, in spite of all your wishes to the contrary, would force itself upon your mind.

The wintry winds without, might be chill and piercing; the repose of your warm couch might be very grateful; and you might feel very reluctant to leave your sheltered and comfortable position to encounter the rude blasts of the midnight storm. But all these considerations would not lead you to conclude, without examination, that the alarm which had been sounded in your ear was a false one. In this case, without waiting to reason about the matter, you would instantly start from your couch, and rush forth from your dwelling.

I was once present in the midst of a very crowded assembly, where a venerable ambassador of Christ was speaking of the deep things of God. Such was



the power of his argument, and so sweet and mellow were the tones of his voice, that he held every eye and ear enchained. At length, as he paused, a person arose in the gallery and said, "This house is on fire—and if we save ourselves, we must get out as fast as we can." What do you think was the effect of this announcement upon that audience, in which there had prevailed almost unbreathing stillness? Do you imagine that they sat quiet in their seats, saying to themselves, "This must be a mistake. We do not see the fire: We do not hear the cracking of the flames: We will not move till we have some better evidence that we are in danger?" No: They did not reason thus. There was an instant rush to the door. Terror, and alarm, and confusion, were spread through the whole house. And though many voices now proclaimed, "This is a false alarm—we are in no danger,"—every individual was pressing forward, alone intent upon making his escape from this supposed scene of danger.

There was a man of God, whose spirit has now gone to mingle in the glorified throng before the throne, who once stood in this pulpit—whom you all knew, and respected, and loved; and whose veracity you never doubted. He opened the sacred volume, and read from its hallowed page, the warrant which authorized him to declare, in reference to every one of you that were unconverted,—“That there was but a hand’s breadth between you and the devouring flames of divine wrath—that you stood that very moment on the crumbling edge of the burning pit,”—and yet there was no movement in the audience that sat before him. There was no instantaneous con-

cern—no alarm running from mind to mind through the ranks of the unconverted.

Why, I inquire, do we find this difference in men's readiness to believe reports concerning the approach of temporal and spiritual evils—this difference in their sensibility to physical and spiritual danger? It is because impenitent men are *asleep*.

What Elijah said to the prophets of Baal as they stood in the presence of all Israel on Mount Carmel, around the altar of their false God, vociferously calling upon him to send down fire to consume their sacrifice, is, in a figurative sense, indisputably true of every human creature while in an unrenewed state—“*he sleepeth.*” And before we can do anything for the salvation of any one of our race, there must be done for him what Elijah told the worshippers of Baal they must do for their God—“*he must be awaked.*”

“*He sleepeth and must be awaked,*” is the axiom with which we must start in every attempt we put forth to “*convert a sinner from the error of his way.*” The natural state of man is fitly represented by the figurative language of the text—“*thou that sleepest.*” This metaphor is frequently employed in the Scriptures to describe the state and condition of unrenewed man. Upon them, according to the divine testimony, “*there hath been poured the spirit of deep sleep.*” To them it is said, “*It is high time to awake out of sleep;*” and in the text they are thus addressed—“*Awake thou that sleepest.*”

1. I remark, that this figurative language implies, *First*, that natural and unrenewed men are *in a state of insensibility*.

When men's senses are locked up in sleep, they become insensible to the external objects around them. Present to the man that is asleep the most finished and beautiful picture; introduce into his chamber some of the most splendid paintings that were ever spread on the canvass, and he will be just as insensible to their beauties as though they were not there. Approach the bedside of him who is asleep, and bending over, whisper into his ear intelligence of the most deep and thrilling interest; bring in a choir of musicians, and let them play the most pleasing tunes, and wake up strains of melody sweeter than were ever heard on earth—sweet as heaven's own minstrelsy—and the sleeping man cares for none of these things—he hears nothing—he is entirely insensible to every sound.

Unconverted men are in the same manner insensible to spiritual things. “*Awake thou that sleepest.*”

2. Again I remark, that this figurative language implies, *Secondly*, that natural and unrenewed men are labouring under deep mental delusion. The man who is asleep has an intellectual principle within him still awake. Images which in his waking hours were gathered from the external world, and broken and disjointed recollections of the past, are constantly flitting before his mind. Reason, however, no longer sits at the balance-wheel. Imagination occupies her seat, and Fancy, now unrestrained, leads the wandering mind on through all her varied and fantastic fields. A thousand imaginary scenes of joy and of wo start up before us, and exert upon our feelings and belief, for a time, all the influence of vivid and

visible realities. Our hopes are elevated, and we are raised to the highest ecstasies of joy. We laugh and sing, and feel that we are treading the Elysian fields of unearthly delight. But in a moment our hopes are dashed to the ground! Some sudden calamity befalls us: the heavens grow dark. Bleak desolation is spread over all our path! We weep; the tears roll down our cheeks; we feel all the bitterness of wo. Our grief is more intense than we can endure! We awake, and lo! it was a dream! We had all this time been elated and agitated by something *unreal—by a delusion*.

And so it is with impenitent and unrenewed men. “They are walking in a *vain* show—and disquieting themselves in *vain*.” If not before, *when* death comes to lay his iron hand upon them, and hurry them forward into the invisible world—they will then wake up, and find that they have been dreaming all their days—chasing phantoms, neglecting things of eternal moment, and grasping at that which is unreal and imaginary.

The scriptural truth taught in our text, then, is that impenitent and unrenewed men are in a state of *insensibility* and *delusion*, and that nothing can be done to save them, till they are awakened.

I shall confine myself this evening to the illustration of the first point—to wit: that unrenewed men are in a state of spiritual *insensibility* and *delusion*.

1. *Unconverted men are insensible to the goodness of God.* Though created with large capacities and susceptibilities of happiness—and placed in the midst of a scene



of things where everything administers to their enjoyment, the language of murmuring and discontent constantly falls from their lips. Though it is God's sun that shines upon them—his earth upon which they tread—his air which they breathe—his table from which they are fed—and his hand that continually upholds them: Though he is ever near them—watching over them with more than maternal tenderness—scattering blessings all along their path—and kindly ministering to all their wants: Though “in him they live, and move, and have their being,” yet their hearts are no more affected by this view of God's goodness, than if all these things were the result of accident and chance! In proof of this, when God calls upon them by his word and ministers, to give him their hearts, and render to him universal obedience—they say, if not with their lips, yet by their conduct, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I answer to this call.” Though God from the highest heaven is pouring down countless blessings upon them, their hearts are no more moved by a view of those mercies, than if they were made of stone. Though they have soundness of limbs, and health of body, they feel under no particular obligation to God for this. Though they have wealth, and friends, and reputation, and great prosperity, and every worldly blessing, they do not look upon themselves as at all indebted to God for these. They may tell you, that they feel thankful for these blessings—by which they mean no more than that they *are very glad* that they have them.

In view of these temporal blessings, they are ready

to exult, and with much self-complacency to conclude, that they are the favourites of the Most High. But let Jehovah put forth his hand and touch all that they have, and they will curse him to his face. Let calamity and temporal reverses sweep away their fortune—let the billows of adversity roll over them,—and their mouths will be immediately filled with murmurings and repinings.

I once knew an unconverted man, that said and thought that he was very thankful for the mercies he enjoyed, and that no one loved God more than he. At this time the sun of prosperity shone brightly on him. His health was firm, and he rolled in wealth. He was respected and loved by all. His children, healthful and promising, were “like olive branches round about his table.” But in the midst of this prosperity a storm gathered. A series of calamities overtook him. He was stripped in a short time of all his glory. His property took to itself wings, and flew away. His children one after another went down to the grave. He had a son of uncommon promise. In the early developments of his mind, that son had given indications of surpassing genius. He was now just ripening into manhood, when disease suddenly came upon him, and he fell beneath the blight of death.

He had one idol still left, a lovely daughter, whose face was ever lit up with the sunshine of happiness, and who seemed to be a creature of almost unearthly origin. But soon the arrow of death pierced her graceful form, and she sank down into the grave. This was the hour of trial. And it was the hour that put to flight all evidences of any just appreciation in the bosom of that unconverted man, of the good-

ness of God. His mouth was filled with complaints, and his heart with hard thoughts against God. He felt in his inmost soul, while he looked over the sad desolation of his house—*that God had done wrong.*

The truth was, there never had been in his mind a full conviction that all the comforts he enjoyed were the gifts of sovereign mercy, and that he was altogether undeserving of them. He had never been led, by a view of the mercies he enjoyed, to prostrate himself at the feet of Jehovah, and say, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which thou hast shown unto me.”—“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?”—“Eternal God, I give myself up to thee—it is my duty, and it shall be my pleasure to obey and serve thee.”—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Unconverted men have no such view of the goodness of God, and are not led to any such acknowledgment of their obligations to Him as this. When they look over the broad field of the Almighty’s works, and see what He is doing for the good of the universe, they sometimes feel awakened within them a touch of sentimental gratitude ; but in a moment it evaporates, and leaves their heart as much at enmity with Him as it was before.

The view which they have of God’s goodness does not lead them to repentance—does not subdue the pride of their hearts—does not lead them to retire to their closets and pour out their soul in prayer before Him—does not lead them to forsake and hate sin, and realize the obligations of duty.

Another evidence that unconverted men are insensible to the goodness of God, is, that “He is not in all their

thoughts.” They seldom think of God, and when the thought of Him comes into their minds they immediately direct their attention to something else—that they may think of him as little as possible. This is not the way they act towards their fellow-men who have done them some distinguished act of kindness. Let one of their fellow-men do one thousandth part as much for them, as God has done, and they would think and talk more of that man in a week, than they have ever thought or talked of God in all their lives. This shows that they are *insensible to the goodness of God*. They are “*asleep*.”

2. I remark, *Secondly, That men are insensible to the claims of God's laws.*

God is the sovereign legislator of the universe. “For his pleasure all things are and were created.” Jehovah was under no obligation to call man into being. Had he chose, he could, without any injustice to us, have left all our race to have slumbered for ever in non-existence. Having called us into being, he certainly had a right to tell us for what he created us, and to require us to fulfil that end. This he did when he gave us a law for the regulation of our conduct. That law was simply an expression of his will and wishes in reference to us.

When parents tell their children what their wishes are in reference to their conduct, if those children are amiable and affectionate, and have any respect for parental authority, they will endeavour to follow the intimations they have received.

Under how much greater obligations are mankind to respect, and reverence, and obey the law of God !



From Him they receive life, and breath, and all things. They are dependent on Him every instant for being. With one breath he could send them all back to annihilation. The law He has promulgated for the regulation of their conduct, is pure, and holy, and good—Calculated alike to promote their own happiness, and to reflect honour upon the author of their being.

Now, unconverted men are insensible, to the claims of this good and holy law. *It* requires them to love God with all their hearts. They do not love him thus, neither can they see how they are very great sinners for neglecting to do so. How great is their delusion !

*This law* says : “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” Unconverted men live without prayer. If they draw near God, it is only with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him. They have no family altar. They have no secret place in their dwelling to which they daily retire to pour out their hearts in supplication before the mercy seat. They live in the constant violation of this law. Their thoughts, and affections, and desires, are entirely given to business, and pleasure, and worldly objects and pursuits. They neither worship nor serve God—and yet they do not think that they are very sinful. Oh, great is their delusion !

This law says, “Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.”

Unconverted men often spend the Sabbath day in unhallowed pursuits—in travelling—in visiting—in reading works of fiction—or the news of the day—or while away the time in light and trifling conversation. And yet after they have thus deliberately trampled

upon one of those holy precepts which God wrote with His own finger upon the table of stone, they are astonished if the minister of Christ addresses them as great sinners.

*The divine law* declares, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Behold now is the accepted time." "To-DAY, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Unconverted men listen to this—and either form no resolution whatever to repent at all, or deliberately conclude to postpone their repentance to a future or dying hour.

Thus we might go on through the whole circle of human duty, and we should find that in every instance where inclination runs counter to the divine command, unconverted men follow inclination rather than the law of God. Independently of public sentiment, and of the fear of punishment in general, they have no respect for the divine law. They are insensible to its claims. They do not stop on the threshold of transgression, and say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!"

Take away the law of the land—let there be no temporal punishment for crime—annihilate public sentiment—let it be just as respectable to commit gross sin as to avoid it—let there be nothing but the law of God to hedge in the path of human duty, and the restraints of that law would be to unconverted men, in the hour of temptation, as frail as a fence of gossamer, which a single breath would sweep away.

Unconverted men are living in daily disobedience to the commands of God. They feel no sorrow on account of this disobedience: and the only reason

why they do not go to greater lengths in sin is, either because they have no inclination to particular vices, or they are restrained from gratifying those inclinations either by a fear of the penalties of the civil law ; or, because public sentiment would frown on them ; or, because they think those indulgences would be hurtful to their health—their temporal interest—their families, or their own reputation. It is not because they dislike to displease Jehovah, or have such a high respect for his law, that they abstain from sin. Where these worldly considerations do not operate, they are constantly trampling upon his law ; and yet they cannot understand how they are *great sinners*.

Does not all this bespeak a total alienation from God—a blindness and delusion and insensibility that are most appalling ? What could be in more perfect contrast with the views, and feelings, and conduct of the inhabitants of the heavenly world ! There is not a being on the Empyrean mount of God, that would think of acting contrary to the slightest intimation of God's will. Any one of the vast myriads that crowd the fields of celestial light, would sooner think of plunging down into the pit of everlasting torment, than of disobeying God in the least thing. And yet unconverted men deliberately and knowingly disobey God—break his holy law—and that every hour—and still they do not think that they are great sinners ! Oh, how insensible unconverted men are to the claims of God's law ! “*They are asleep.*”

3. I remark, *Thirdly, That unconverted men are insensible to their actual situation as condemned criminals before God.*

The divine law cannot be broken with impunity. It is enforced by the most awful sanctions. Its language is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "The soul that sinneth—it shall die."

The gospel and our own consciences declare that "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." We are therefore all under condemnation and death. Christ has opened a door of escape—and those who flee to him by faith, are delivered from condemnation. But unconverted men will not flee to Christ—they will not lay hold of his offers of mercy by faith. And hence the Scriptures declare in reference to this want of faith in unconverted men, that "*He that believeth not is condemned already.*" Let us pause for a moment and weigh the meaning of this expression.

A man is arrested for crime. He is brought to trial—the charges preferred against him are substantiated—he is found guilty, and sentence of death is pronounced upon him. After the judge has pronounced the sentence, the prisoner is sent back to his gloomy cell to await the arrival of the appointed hour, when he will be brought forth and executed. We might say of such an one, "*he is condemned already.*"

And what would you think, were you to go to the cell of this prisoner, thus under sentence of death, and find that he was careless of his fate? Would it not shock you to see him, gay, and light, and trifling? And in speaking of him, would you not say, "That man is awfully insensible to his situation!"

Now let us look into society, and see if we do not find something analogous to this.



All unconverted men are under sentence of condemnation. They are condemned already. They are only waiting till death shall conduct them to the place of execution. The pit is already gaping to receive them ! And yet how do they act, and live ? Why they are dancing along the road to the place of their execution, merry and unconcerned as men going to a feast ! Bound to the fiery pit, and travelling there as fast as their feet can carry them, they laugh and sing, and wonder why Christians can feel so much anxiety about them ! Covered with guilt, and under condemnation, they are flattering themselves that all will be well with them in the end ! Oh, what miserable delusion is this ! Look into the theatre—the ball-room—the gilded saloons of pleasure—filled with unconverted men and women—with those who are under sentence of condemnation—those who have not been born again—have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, upon whom abideth the wrath of God—do they act as though they were sensible of this ? Oh, how awfully insensible men are to their situation !

Look into the factory—the work-shop—the market—the exchange : behold what crowds of unconverted men under sentence of condemnation, are intent only upon wealth, pleasure, honour, or applause !

Or look even into the temple of the Most High—where a fearful proportion of the auditors will be found to be in an unconverted state, and therefore under condemnation. And yet how little impressed are they by all the solemn truths addressed to them ! No one who reflects for a moment, can call in question the truth of the position that unconverted men are

insensible to their actual situation as condemned criminals before God.

4. I remark, *Fourthly, That unconverted men are insensible to the awful truth, that while they remain unconverted they are every moment advancing in the downward path to death.*

The Saviour distinctly declares, that in the things of religion, there is no neutral ground upon which any human being can stand. "He that is not with me, is against me." Every man is either the friend or the enemy of God. There are only two paths in which the whole human family are travelling on to the eternal world. The one leads to heaven—the other to hell! Every unconverted man is in the path that leads to the burning pit. He does not stop for a moment, but goes forward continually. Every step he takes conducts him nearer and nearer to the fatal edge, from which he will make the final everlasting plunge!

And yet how blind to this awful truth are unconverted men! They believe that, in some way or other, they will be finally saved. They attempt a little external reformation, and then flatter themselves that all is well. Many of them do not go so far as to *commence* even an external reformation—but merely resolve to do so at some future period. With this they soothe their consciences, and persuade themselves that there is no occasion for present anxiety. They forget that every moment they continue in a state of impenitence and alienation from God, they are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." They lose sight

of the solemn truth, "that they that are in the flesh cannot please God;" and that Jehovah has said, with a deep emphasis, "*Ye must be born again.*" While, therefore, they are only advancing in the downward path, and will continue to advance, till they are cleansed with the blood of sprinkling and are born from on high, they are flattering themselves that they are growing better, and are ripening for heaven.

5. I remark, *Fifthly, That unconverted men are insensible to "the terrors of the Lord."*

God declares that, He "will by no means acquit the guilty,"—that "the soul that sinneth shall die,"—that "the wages of sin is death,"—that "the wicked shall be turned into hell,"—that "he that believeth not shall be damned,"—that He "will pour out indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil,"—that "they that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence and the glory of His power."

The Scriptures declare, that at death the wicked will sink down into a burning pit—into inextinguishable fires, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. If a temporal calamity half as terrific as this were threatened, no arguments would be necessary to persuade men to flee for their lives. Let the angel of destruction come down and roll the cloud of death over this city—let him shake pestilence from his sable wings—and the report once go forth—let the unseen fatal contagion creep from street to street—and how many hours would elapse before the whole city would be in commotion? Though

all the physicians here should unite in their testimony, that there was as much safety in remaining as in attempting to fly from the pestilence, who would be persuaded to stay while death was rioting upon hundreds every hour? But should all the medical corps solemnly declare, that they could do nothing to arrest the progress of this deadly plague—that the only safety was in instant flight—that it would unquestionably enter every dwelling, and cut down every being that lingered within the precincts of the city—where is the man that would not heed this warning? In such a case all would feel—all would attempt to fly from the grasp of the destroyer.

But unconverted men hear God himself declaring, by his word, that there is but a hair's breadth between them and the devouring flames of Almighty wrath, and feel no alarm! They hear this, and remain just as unconcerned, as though it was an idle tale. Oh, how insensible they are to “*the terror of the Lord!*” *They are asleep.*

6. *Again, I remark, That unconverted men are insensible to the love of Christ—to the claims of the Gospel—to the overtures of pardon and life, through the blood of the cross.*

Had one of our countrymen, who at home had been nursed in the lap of ease, in making a voyage to the Indies, been shipwrecked, and cast with life just remaining upon a barbarous shore—had he there been seized upon by a merciless master—reduced to the most degrading servitude, and forced to perform the most menial offices, while he was allowed food scarcely sufficient to keep him alive;—and had the news of



this come to his friends, and had they sent one to ransom him from this bondage, and should this friend, who had gone out on this errand of mercy, meet him on the burning desert, where he was dragged along in the train of a cruel Arab—and having negotiated for his redemption, announce to him that he was free, how would he receive these tidings? Would this enslaved, down-trodden son of freedom listen to this intelligence with apathy and indifference? Would he turn away with cold and careless neglect from this friend who had come to search him out, and to redeem him from bondage? No! no. This is not the way in which men act under such circumstances. But it is precisely the way in which unconverted men act, when they are told of the redemption that is in Christ.

In the case just referred to, had the cruel Arab master refused to let this unfortunate shipwrecked man go—refused to accept any sum for his ransom, and had the news of this been carried back to his native land—and were one, whom he had greatly injured, so affected by the story of his sufferings, as to sell all that he had, in order to try to redeem him—should he start in quest of him, carrying all that he was worth, and when he had found him, and offered to the cruel master that held him enslaved, all his estate for his ransom: and when it was refused, should he offer to take the place of this enslaved one—wear his chains, and bid an eternal adieu to country and home on condition that he could be released, how would the heart of that enslaved one be affected by this wonderful, unparalleled act of kindness? Oh! how big would be the emotions that would dwell in his bosom

at this moment ! He could not be insensible to such a display of kindness.

And yet Jesus Christ has done all, and more than this, for sinners. He has died for the ungodly. He has died to ransom from death eternal and the power of hell, the unconverted who have done nothing but injure him all their lives. But unconverted men are not in the least affected by this intelligence. They hear it with the most fixed apathy. Though descending with fearful celerity down to the chambers of death, where they will enter upon an eternal bondage, and no ransom will ever come to deliver them, they heed not the overtures of mercy, they turn a deaf ear to the invitations of the Gospel, they care not for the love or the sufferings of Christ. They listen to the offers of pardon and life, as though these were matters with which they had no concern. Oh, how true it is that unconverted men are asleep !

7. Finally, I remark, *That unconverted men are insensible to the solemn realities of death, judgment and eternity.*

A voice comes from all nature around us, as well as from the pages of God's word, proclaiming THAT WE MUST DIE. Not a day passes but this voice sounds in our ear ; and this solemn truth is brought vividly to our recollection. Nearly half the people that we used to meet ten years ago in the engagements of business, and at the house of God, are now in their graves. What an immense congregation would be here, if all who ONCE moved around with us amid the circles of the living, but now sleep in the dust of the earth, were present at this time ! Though we should

all retire to give them room, this house would not contain half the number ! And how soon shall we—how soon will all that now live, join that vast congregation of the dead !

But this thought makes no impression upon the minds of unconverted men. One and another drops around them, and goes to the retributions of eternity. But they heed it not.

Their attention is continually directed to that awful judgment seat, before which they must shortly stand, and to that immeasurable eternity, whose ages will never end, and where the soul is fixed in a state unchangeable and everlasting,—and yet they immediately thrust these thoughts out of their minds, and amuse themselves with the passing shadows that flit before them. When they see their friends, one after another, going down to the grave, they drop a tear or two over their coffin; seriousness may, for a moment, come over their minds; but soon the impression fades away, and they go on just as thoughtless and as unconcerned as before. Is it not evident that unconverted men *are asleep* ? Does not the view that we have now been taking most clearly show, that before anything can be done for the spiritual and everlasting good of unconverted men, they must be *awakened* ? “*Awake, thou that sleepest.*”

This will constitute the subject of our lecture next Sunday evening. I will not anticipate the train of thought that will then be pursued.

In concluding, I will barely inquire, in view of the facts to which your attention has now been called,

what course ought the minister of Christ to pursue? If unconverted men stand on the outer edge of a precipice, and will soon make the final, irrecoverable plunge—and are *asleep*, insensible to their danger—what is the duty of Christians, and of Christian ministers in reference to them? Is it not manifestly their duty to endeavor to arouse them to a sense of their condition? Placed, in the Providence of God, on these walls of Zion—having received this solemn charge, “Son of man, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand,”—beholding an immense number of the people of my own charge, for whom I shall have to give an account at the bar of God, going on to death and to judgment, impenitent, unpardoned, unreconciled to God, and yet insensible to their guilt and danger—what is my duty? Is it not to try to awaken these to a sense of their condition, and to point them to that life-giving tree, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations?

This is the effort upon which I have now entered; and, unconverted friend, I entreat you, consider on whose errand I come, and despise not the message I deliver. I come not in my own name, but at the bidding of the great God. The eternal God that made you for a life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by the blood of his Son, hath sent me to “pray you in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God.” He sees how unhesitatingly you trample upon His holy law—how fearless you are of his threatenings, and how careless of your souls. He sees that the dreadful day will soon be at hand when your sorrows will begin, and all your cries will be fruitless and unavailing.



In compassion, therefore, he has sent one and another messenger, in His name, to tell you plainly of your sin and misery—of what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see if you go on in impenitence a little longer. Having bought you at no less price than by the blood of His son Jesus Christ, and made you a free promise of pardon, and grace, and everlasting glory, He commands me to tender all this to you as the gift of God, and to entreat you to consider the worth of what He offers you.

He sees and pities you, while you are absorbed in cares and pleasures—chasing after childish toys, and wasting that precious time in pursuits of vanity which you ought to devote to a preparation for eternity; and therefore, He hath commanded His ministers to call after you, and tell you that you will lose both your labor and your souls.

In obedience to this command, I stand before you this evening. I stand here to deliver the message of Him who sent me. He has charged me *to preach*—to be instant in season and out of season—to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and show you your transgressions and your sins. But, alas! the unconverted around us are asleep! How often have they stopped their ears, and stiffened their necks, and hardened their hearts, and sent the minister of Christ back to the feet of his divine master, to tell him that he has delivered his message, but has done them no good. Oh, that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night over these slumbering, careless, unconverted souls, that have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven, and yet have not hearts to know and value them!!

Allow me here to adopt the sentiment and language of the sainted Baxter, and say, "Oh, that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears! We have sought to speak with all plainness to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us. We have brought before them the most affecting truths to make them feel, but they will not feel. If the most important considerations would influence them, we should arouse them—if the most constraining motives would move them, we should win their hearts—if the most awful and tremendous threatenings could startle them, we should at least deter them from their wickedness—if truth and certainty had any weight with them, we should soon convince them—if the God that made them, and the Christ that bought them might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them—if the holy scriptures were regarded, we should soon prevail—if reason, even the best and strongest reason, were listened to, we should have no doubt as to the result—if experience were consulted, we should be sure of persuading them—if conscience were heeded, we should feel confident that they would be brought to Christ.

"But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of Heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If Heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be nothing worth—if they can jest at Hell, and dance on the edge of the bottomless pit, and play with the con-

suming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it, what shall we do for such souls as these?"\*

Blessed God, thy voice can wake up the dead; our reliance is on thy everlasting arm. While we proclaim thy truth here from Sabbath to Sabbath, may the dead hear the voice of Jesus and live!

“Lord, open sinners’ eyes,  
Their awful state to see;  
And make them, ere the storm arise,  
To thee for safety flee.” Amen.

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\*The sentiments and considerable of the language from page 28 inclusive, is taken from Baxter, in his “*Call to the Unconverted.*”

## DISCOURSE II.

### UNCONVERTED MEN MUST BE AWAKENED.

“Awake thou that sleepest.”

EPH. v. 14.

No man who reasons at all, or has any respect for the word of God, or any sense of moral obligation, can seriously maintain the opinion, that live here as he may, wallowing in sin and reckless of the authority of high Heaven, death will cure all, and usher him, in a moment, into the blissful society of the redeemed. Conscience, that witness for God within every human bosom, sternly rebukes such a vain expectation, and accords to the testimony of the divine word, “*that after death is the judgment.*”

We read of one who did not trouble himself for anything beyond the present scene, and who, when he surveyed his vast possessions and extended resources, said to himself, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But as we look along a little farther, we read that “*he died : and that in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.*” Our souls then will not enter Heaven as a matter of course when we die.



There is only one way in which any human being can enter Heaven ; and that is by *being born again* and *made a new creature in Christ Jesus*. We are distinctly told that there is salvation in no other : that “there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved ;” and that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The reason of this is, that all mankind are corrupt and depraved : they have broken the law of God, and are in a guilty and condemned state. And what is truly wonderful, though God himself has apprised them of it, all impenitent men, up to the present hour, are wilfully ignorant of this fact. They are ignorant of their true moral standing in the sight of God ; and hence the Scriptures describe them as asleep. “*Awake, thou that sleepest !*”

In speaking upon this passage last Sunday evening, we endeavoured to show that all unconverted men were asleep—were in a state of insensibility and delusion. We design to illustrate this evening, the position, that *the first thing to be done in order to save unconverted men, is to awaken them*. How truly does this figure describe asleep—*insensible*. “*Awake, thou that sleepest !*”

Men who are in that state of partial and temporary suspension of the mental powers which we denominate sleep, can do nothing towards averting danger to which they may be exposed, or discharging duties that may be incumbent upon them, until they are awakened. I will endeavour to illustrate this idea.

It is well known that on that noble stream that empties the gathered waters of a hundred lakes over

the tremendous cataract of Niagara, several miles above the fearful precipice, from the formation of the country, and the bed of the channel, there is a rapid descent; and the waters as they roll along acquire a fearful impetus, as though eager and anxious to leap forward and find repose in the bed of the ocean. If the skiff of the fisherman, or the canoe of the Indian, once gets into this current, it cannot be turned aside by any human skill, but is borne with the lightning's speed onward, and still onward, till it reaches the fatal precipice, and is plunged, amid the deafening roar and dashing waters, into the vast, foaming abyss beneath, broken and shivered into ten thousand atoms. Were we standing on the banks of that river, and did we see a bark slowly gliding down the stream, and know that all who were on board were asleep: were we acquainted with the fact of their danger—did we know that the current which was bearing them slowly on, would in less than an hour conduct them to a point in the stream where destruction would be inevitable, what course should we adopt to save them? Would it not be to attempt to awaken them? If by the report of fire-arms, or by any other means, they could be aroused from their slumbers, they would be able now to turn their bark aside and escape; but in a single hour the stream would drift them down to a point where there was no turning back, nor turning aside. The only hope of saving them, therefore, would be to awaken them.

This is precisely the condition of every unconverted man. His bark is gliding down the stream of time towards an awful precipice. It will soon reach a point where you cannot turn it aside. And yet he is asleep.

He must awake speedily, or perish. This is why we stand here to night, and cry, "Awake, thou that sleepest."

Another illustration. It is midnight. In yonder habitation a father sleeps with his dear children around him. She who was once the light of that house, and the centre of its domestic happiness, has gone down to the grave, and those children are now motherless. That father feels that he could not live if these dear little ones were not around him. But since his eyes are closed in sleep, that dear boy that lies at his side has been attacked with disease. The fatal destroyer is advancing towards him with rapid strides. Already is that blooming one marked for death. A fever burns through his veins—his respiration is fearfully embarrassed—he even now seems panting and gasping for life. Why does not that parent rise to minister to his child? *He is asleep.* The child grows still worse; but even now if powerful remedies were applied—if that little one could have the benefit of medical advice, he might be saved. Oh, why does not that father fly to the physician; why does he not hasten to bring relief to his child? *He is asleep.* Let him once be *awakened*, and see what anxiety he will manifest; what efforts he will put forth, and what exertions he will make to save that child's life.

In like manner must unconverted men be awakened, before they can be made to see and realize the obligations and duties that press upon them. They must awake to a perception of the character of God—to a perception of His goodness, His holiness, and His sovereignty; and of the relations they sustain, and the obligations they are under to Him. They

must awake to a perception of the claims of God's law, and to a sense of their actual situation as condemned criminals before Him. They must awake to the full discovery that as long as they remain impenitent, they are every moment going onward towards perdition—towards the edge of the fiery pit. They must awake to a realizing view of their enormous ingratitude in neglecting the overtures of grace, and in trampling under foot the precious blood of Christ. They must awake to the admonition of that solemn voice, which, with trumpet tongue, bids them prepare for death, judgment, and eternity.

But here the question may arise—*how* are unconverted men to be awakened? Is it *criminal* for them to remain in this state of slumber? There can be no doubt but unmeasured guilt attaches itself to every one who thus continues in spiritual sleep. All unconverted men have powers and faculties which, if they would use, would lead them to discover their guilt and danger. The whole truth is spread before them in God's word. They have only to bring the same powers of attention and discrimination to its sacred page that they every day bring to their business, and they would then see things in a true light. But they are not willing to bring those powers of thought and attention to an examination of the subject of religion which they daily apply to the ordinary affairs of life. And herein consists their great folly and guilt. “Light is come into the world; but men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”



God employs a diversity of means by which to awaken unconverted men. He appoints to one, a reverse of fortune—the bright sun of prosperity goes down at noonday—everything seems to frown upon him; his plans are all broken up; poverty stares him in the face; he knows not what hardships and sufferings may be before him. Life now appears to him a different thing from what it once did: God means that these calamities shall wake that man up, and lead him to seek everlasting riches in Christ.

Upon another he sends disease and sickness. Though he has wealth, and the means of indulgence, he drags around a poor sickly body that can enjoy none of these things; and which reminds him by its pains, and feebleness, and lassitude, that he is standing on the very verge of eternity.

The Creator designs that this calamity shall wake him up from the dream of his worldliness, and lead him to prepare for that heavenly world, “where the inhabitants no more say, I am sick.”

Upon a third the Lord sends affliction in another form. Death comes suddenly, and tears away some dear friend, a beloved wife, or darling child, or affectionate parent.

By every such visitation God says to the careless and impenitent, *Be ye also ready*. How often has God sought in this way to wake up the careless and impenitent in this congregation from the dream of their delusion! How many sable badges, the insignia of bereavement and mourning, are now before me, to attest the truth of this remark! And yet, alas! how few have been awakened by these solemn calls of God!



*Another means*, and what may perhaps be denominated the ordinary mode by which unconverted men are awakened, is *the preaching of the word*. This is the *divinely* appointed way of awakening men. We are therefore encouraged to hope that our efforts will not be in vain. Besides the fact, to which allusion has just been made, that this is the divinely appointed way of awakening men, the grounds of our encouragement are:

1. That we come in the name of God. As the prophet was commanded to go and prophesy over the valley of dry bones, so we have been commissioned to stand on these walls of Zion, and proclaim to you the message of the Lord. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." We ask you to heed our message, not for our sake, but for the sake of that glorious Being who holds you in the hollow of his hand, and who has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.

2. Another ground of encouragement is, that we proclaim to you, not our *own message*, but the word of the Lord; and God has said that his word shall be quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; that it shall be like a hammer to the rock; that "it shall not return unto him void, but accomplish the thing whereunto he sends it." We believe that God is *as able* to wake up from the slumbers of spiritual sleep, unconverted men *here*, while we cry—"Awake, thou that sleepest," as he was to cause that great multitude of men, clothed with flesh and animated with life, to start up from the valley of dry bones, when the prophet stood there and cried,—

“Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.”

3. And, *Thirdly*, another ground of encouragement, that leads us to hope that this effort will not be in vain is, that *the Spirit of the living God is here*. Christians, do I not speak advisedly? If the Eternal Spirit is not here present, it is because our *sins*, or *our want of faith and prayer* have caused him to depart. Oh, can it be, that in this sacred temple, where have been acted so many scenes over which the angels of heaven have rejoiced, there is not such a number of faithful petitioners now present as to secure that best promise of Christ—the gift of His Spirit? I cannot believe it. I know that many fervent prayers have gone up to God for a blessing on the exercises of this evening, and especially for the descent of the Holy Spirit. Those prayers have pierced the heavens, and reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. He has said, “Ask, and ye shall receive.”

I do not speak unadvisedly then in saying, that the Spirit of the living God is here. And my hope is, that what is offered at this time, “in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling,” will, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, be carried home to the hearts and consciences of unconverted men, and wake them up to the eternal realities that are around them.

I desire to be permitted again this evening to speak to them with all plainness and fidelity. With my present feelings I cannot speak to them in any other terms than those of love and affection. It is the deep interest I feel in your eternal welfare, and the earnest desire that burns in my bosom to see you one day in

the kingdom of glory, that prompts me to make this effort—that emboldens me to stand here and spread the whole truth before you. Let me, then, as your friend, expostulate with you, and tell you all your danger—“*Awake, thou that sleepest !*”

Every unconverted man is asleep; and by *the unconverted* I mean, not simply those who are profane, abandoned, or profligate. There may be some such here this evening; and if so, may God speak to their consciences with a voice of thunder. Neither by *the unconverted* do I mean merely those who violate the Sabbath or neglect public worship; those who have injured their neighbours in their lives, their chastity, or their property, through violence or fraud; or those who have debased their rational nature by vile intemperance. If there be any such in this house to-night—and God knows whether there is—may the words spoken be like scorpion-stings to their souls, waking them up from the slumber of spiritual death. But men may avoid all these gross vices: yea, exemplify in their lives many of those sweet graces and moral virtues that dignify and adorn the human character; and still be unconverted.

In addressing you, my hearer, as belonging to the class of the *unconverted*, I would charge you with nothing more than is absolutely necessary to convince you, that you are the person to whom I speak. I will suppose, that you believe the existence and providence of God, and the truth of Christianity as a revelation from Him; that your conduct among men is not only blameless, but truly amiable; and that those who know you best acknowledge that you are just and

sober, kind and courteous, compassionate and liberal. And yet with all this, that you have never truly repented of your sins, and embraced Christ by faith as the Saviour of your soul—that you *lack that one thing* on which your eternal happiness depends—that when you lay your hand upon your heart, and ask yourself as in the presence of the infinitely pure and holy God, Am I truly religious? Have I ever seen, and mourned over my sins? Have I ever gone as a lost and perishing sinner to the feet of Jesus, and cast myself on him? Do I love God more than any earthly object? Do I walk continually under a sense of his presence? Do I hold communion with him from day to day in the exercise of prayer and praise? Am I, on the whole, making his service my business and delight? When you lay your hand on your heart and attempt to answer these questions, as in the presence of the omniscient Jehovah—you are obliged, in strict truth, to say—“No, I cannot affirm this of myself.”

My message then is to you. Whether you are high or low, rich or poor, young or old, learned or unlearned, it matters not. By your own concession, you are an unconverted sinner—you have not been born again, and God bids me lift up my voice and cry in your ears, “*Awake, thou that sleepest.*”

Just pause for one moment, and consider what a strange infatuation is upon you, lulling thought and reflection to sleep.

Though you profess to believe that the Gospel is divine, and its blessings eternal, you are living with just the same indifference to eternal things as though you had long since demonstrated to yourself, that the



news of salvation through a crucified Redeemer was a mere dream. You are living just as though God took no cognizance of your doings : and it is not improbable that the very last time that you were in a worshipping assembly, you managed just as you would, if you had thought God knew nothing of your behaviour—or, as if you did not think it worth one single care whether he were pleased or displeased with it.\*

Oh, unconverted friend, in the name of all that is sacred, *awake !*

1. *Awake to a sense of the divine goodness.* Stop for one moment and consider how, all your life long, you have forgotten and neglected your great and glorious benefactor ! Is it right, or reasonable, to neglect God thus ? Tell me, do you really think it is ? What has He not done for you ? What mercy—what blessing—what comfort did you ever have, that did not come from God ? Would you have treated any earthly benefactor as you have the great God of Heaven ? What would you have thought of yourself, if you had neglected a kind parent, or a generous friend as you have God—if you had taken no notice of him while in his presence—returned him no thanks, and had no contrivances to make some little acknowledgment for all his goodness ? The very brute creation have more sense of gratitude than this ! One has well remarked,—“ If you do but for a few days take a little notice of a dog, and feed him with the refuse of your table, he will wait upon you and

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\* Some of the preceding sentiments are from Doddridge's “ Rise and Progress”. See Page 26.



love to be near you : he will be eager to follow you from place to place ; and when, after a little absence, you return home, will try by a thousand fond transported motions to tell you how much he rejoices to see you again.”\*

Yea, “ the stupid ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” but unconverted men do not know, nor bless the hand that feeds them. Is not the sin of ingratitude the blackest in the whole catalogue of human crime ? Who does not feel that he is injured when he does everything for a friend or a child, and all the benefits he has conferred are forgotten, and he receives nothing but unkindness and ingratitude in return ?

“ Blow—blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind,  
As man’s ingratitude ;  
Thy tooth is not so keen,  
Because thou art not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,  
Thou dost not bite so nigh,  
As benefits forgot :  
Though thou the waters warp  
Thy sting is not so sharp  
As friend remembered not.”

Can you, my hearer, think yourself safe while acting such a part towards the great God of heaven—while living unmindful of his goodness, and thankless for all his unnumbered mercies ? Oh, *awake*—  
“ *Awake, thou that sleepest !*”

2. *Awake to the claims of God’s holy law.* That law

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\* Doddridge.

cannot be broken with impunity. It is a perfect transcript of God's mind and will, and not the result of a capricious legislation. It is what the all-perfect Jehovah, in the plenitude of infinite wisdom, has educed as best calculated to promote his own glory and the happiness of mankind. The precepts of this law are enforced by the most awful sanctions—*eternal life* and *eternal death*. No one can break this law without being pronounced a rebel, and without drawing down upon himself the curse of Jehovah.

Now, if God's authority be anything—if *his* judgment as to what will make his creatures happy, be anything—if His threatenings and infinite wrath be anything—if the agonies of an eternal hell be anything,—then, unconverted hearer, awake to the claims of God's law!

Every unconverted man is living under *that* law, and if he does not regard its claims here, he will *hereafter* be under its curse for ever. *Awake, then, thou that sleepest!* Contemplate the divine law! Behold it in its length and breadth. See how it takes cognizance of all your deeds, and words, and thoughts! Are you willing to stand before the bar of God, and be tried by its high and holy requirements? Look—oh, look into your heart, and see if, when its unpublished secrets come to be all laid open, you will be able to lift up your head, and meet a holy God without fear! “Awake, thou that sleepest!”

3. *Awake to the awful fact that you are even now under condemnation.* Impenitent men often cheer themselves with the hope that in the day of judgment they will escape condemnation through the divine benignity—forgetting that the Scriptures declare that

they are *condemned already*. “He that believeth not is condemned already.” Yes, unconverted man, this is your case—*you are condemned already*. You are in the situation of one who has been tried, and found guilty, and sentenced, and awaits the hour of execution. God has pronounced sentence of condemnation upon you. You have not only broken his law, but you have refused, or neglected to avail yourself of the offer of pardon through Jesus Christ, which he has caused to be proclaimed a thousand times in your hearing. Condemned by the law, and having up to this very time rejected the grace of the Gospel, there is a double condemnation that hangs over you. You are every day in danger of dropping into endless misery. Your friends, and all around you, if they knew what your condition was, might well lift up a loud and bitter cry, whenever they beheld you, and say, “Here is an unhappy being under the condemnation of Almighty God—here is a miserable man who is in danger every day of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of wo! Here is a wretched, undone creature, condemned to lie down for ever in unquenchable fire, and to dwell in everlasting burnings. He has no interest in Christ. He has nothing to defend him—nothing wherewith to appease the wrath of an offended God.”\* Oh thou under-condemnation sinner, how canst thou take any comfort—how canst thou trifle and laugh and be merry, while the wrath of God hangs over thee? Dost thou not know that in the sight of God thou art covered with guilt? There is no place in heaven that could hold thee; its very

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\* See Edwards' Works, vol. 8, page 212.

pavements would give way, shrinking from thy polluted tread, to let thee into the burning pit below ! There is not a being on the eternal mount that would not fly from thy presence. If thou couldst scale the wall of heaven, and force thy entrance into the new Jerusalem, it would be instantly emptied ! Yea, the sainted mother who bore thee, and who is now a burning seraph before the throne, would fly from thy presence ! Oh, awake to a sense of thy true character and condition !

You may say that all this is the painting of the imagination ; but in the end, you will find that these are the words of soberness and truth. You may say—" I cannot think that I am the guilty, condemned one, which this statement represents me." Impenitent friend, I am aware of this. I know that your mind is full of unbelief. I know that you are *asleep*. And it is on this account that God has sent me to try to awaken you ; and if I do not succeed, or some other messenger, then all my labour will be in vain, and your soul will perish ! Therefore, in the name of God, I again call upon you—*awake ! Awake, thou that sleepest !*

4. Awake to the awful fact, *that until you are truly converted, every step you take is conducting you down to the bottomless pit.*

Some persons seem to think that by breaking off a few gross immoralities, or by exemplifying a few of the moral virtues in their conduct, they have made great advance towards heaven. But in this idea they are greatly mistaken. Until they truly repent of their sins, and look unto God, through Christ, for mercy—



until their hearts are changed by the operation of the Holy Spirit—they never take a single step towards heaven. Though they reform their conduct ever so much—they still keep on in the downward path until they give up their hearts to God.

Others often persuade themselves that by having become serious, and felt convictions of sin, they have travelled no inconsiderable way towards heaven. This is also an entirely mistaken view of the matter. So far from being on their way to heaven, they have not yet stopped going down the broad road; and never will stop till they repent—till they submit their hearts to God, till they turn, till they are converted.

This then is your case, oh, unconverted man! You are going down to the chambers of death! Every while you listen to me, you are advancing! Oh, awake—"awake, thou that sleepest!" Behold your danger, and turn before it is for ever too late.

*5. Awake to a perception of the awful punishment, that will be your certain doom, if you remain impenitent and without Christ.*

The scriptures speak of the misery that awaits the soul; that has no lot nor part in Christ, under metaphors the most appalling and terrific. They describe it as indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish—the gnawings of a worm that never dies, the consuming of a fire that cannot be quenched. A prison-house, dark and awful, where there is ceaseless weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. A vast pit, deep and dismal, from which issues the smoke of torments that never end. A lake of fire, where the burning billows of wrath roll over the agonized soul, through



all the ceaseless ages of eternity! Oh, unconverted sinner, awake to a perception of the misery that is before thee. Sleep no longer on the brink of the bottomless pit.

6. *Awake to a perception of the love of God in Christ.*

Though thou hast ruined thyself—though thou hast been most ungrateful to God—having, all thy life, neglected and forgotten Him who gave thee life and breath, and all things: though thou hast trampled on his law, and virtually said, “I will not have thee to reign over me:” though thou art under condemnation, and thy every step is conducting thee onward to the prison-house of despair, and even now the pit gapes, and opens its mouth to receive thee! God, thy Maker, does not wish thee to die: he has stirred up all heaven in solicitude for thy rescue! He has sent his Son to die in thy place: and a foundation has been laid for thy deliverance in his own glory. And the glorious Son of God, who died for thee, is even now, while I speak, standing before the throne of his Father interceding for thee! Yea, God himself, from his eternal throne, is saying, “As I live, I have no pleasure in thy death. Turn—turn—why wilt thou die?” This very moment, the blessed Saviour holds thee back from the yawning pit, and beseeches thee to be reconciled to God. This very moment the Holy Spirit knocks at the door of thy heart, and says, “*Sinner, turn—turn.*”

This very moment, the eternal God is saying to thee: “Come, now let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow;

though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!" "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." May I not, *then*, reiterate my message to thee, and say, *awake*! Be no longer insensible to the love of God in Christ. Do not cast away from you this rich boon of everlasting life! *Awake*—awake, and see its unspeakable value!

7. *Finally*, I would bid you, *Awake to the solemn realities of death, judgment and eternity!*

If you are not awakened by my voice, there is a voice that ere long will awaken you.

While your acquaintances and friends are dropping around you into the grave, it is strange that you are so insensible to your own mortality, and the scenes that lie beyond it. A thin wall of flesh and blood is all that stands between your soul and the bottomless pit! A thousand events are transpiring around you every hour, which could easily break down that frail wall, and launch your immortal spirit into that fearful abyss! There is not a step you take, nor a particle of food you eat, nor a breath you draw, that might not be the occasion of your death. You are hanging by a single thread, over a ruined eternity; and there is not an instant in which that thread may not be broken! And then you drop into that eternity, for ever lost! And yet you are asleep:—Oh, awake, thou that sleepest!

In a little while you will be dead! Your soul will be arraigned at the bar of God. You will hear the awful words, "*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!*" You will then *awake*! but it will be too late!

Dying fellow sinner, awake to-night ! To-morrow it may be too late. *Now—now* is the time !

Unconverted hearer, what do you say ? This evening, I have not sought to *please* but to *save* you. The Holy Ghost is witness that “ *my heart’s desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved.* ” You cannot be saved, unless you awake. “ Oh, sleeper, what meanest thou ? Arise, and call upon thy God ! ” Again I would repeat my message and say, “ *Awake, thou that sleepest.* ”

I trust there are some in this congregation, that are waking up from that deep sleep, that has been upon them all their life, and are beginning to see their guilt and danger. Under the hope that this, my labor in the Lord, will not be in vain, I propose, next Sunday evening, to address the same class to whom my discourse has been directed this evening. I shall *then* endeavour to exhibit the reasons why the business of religion should be attended to *at once*, rather than at any future season.

*But*—the solemn thought occurs to me—that I may never preach again in this pulpit ! Before the shades of another Sabbath evening gather over the earth, my voice may be silent in death. Or, should I stand here next Sabbath evening, you may then lie on a sick bed from which you will never rise. This may be the last call you will ever hear ! But mark, if you go to the judgment bar with this sermon ringing in your ears, you will not go unwarned.

God is witness that I have spoken to you to-night what I believe to be the truth ; and I have spoken it

in love. The judgment day will disclose the certainty of what I now utter. In the judgment day—in the judgment day, sinner, we meet again!!!

## DISCOURSE III.

### IMPORTANCE OF IMMEDIATE ATTENTION TO RELIGION.

“Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”—Acts. xxiv. 25.

THOUGH God dwelleth above, far out of sight, he does not shut himself up in eternal silence, in the bright pavilion of his glory. He speaks to us through many mediums. He hath given to every part of the universe towards which we can turn our eye, a tongue which declares, “*I have a message to thee from God.*” And yet to all these voices which come to us from so many quarters, urging upon us the obligations of duty, we say, “*Go thy way for this time.*” Is it not so?

Have you not stood, on a cloudless night, and surveyed the star-lit heaven, and gazed with ecstasy and wonder upon the millions of worlds that floated before you in the vast expanse of infinite space, and thought of that Almighty Being who awoke these worlds into existence, and upholds them by the word of his power? And did not a voice then come upon your ear, amid the stillness and majesty of the surrounding scene, saying, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork,”



—love and serve this Being with all your powers ? And were you led to consecrate yourself from that moment to the service of God, or did you not rather say to that heavenly voice—*go thy way for this time ?*

You have stood in the grey dusk of morn, and while the shades still hung over the earth, and all nature still slumbered in soft repose, you have seen a faint streak of light in the eastern sky. That faint streak, as you gazed upon it, acquired one tint of brightness after another, till it was expanded into a tide of brilliancy that chased away the shades of darkness, and lit up the whole heavens with all the effulgence of a risen sun, and as you gazed upon this enrapturing scene, a voice came upon your ear, saying, “How glorious is that God at whose bidding the sun ariseth—who appoints day and night, and watches over all his creatures with paternal kindness ! Love this God with all your heart, and serve Him with all your powers.” And did you then give up your heart to God, and commence a new and holy life : or rather, did you not say—“*Go thy way for this time ?*”

You have stood in the open field, and seen waving before you the varied products of the earth—the golden wheat, the tasselled corn, and the verdant grass ; and every stalk of grain, and every spire of grass that stood before you, though the chisel had never been lifted upon it, nor the sound of the saw or the hammer heard there, presented a specimen of the most finished and exquisite workmanship—bespeaking the wisdom and power of that God, who “causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man—that he may bring forth food out of the earth,”—

and as you have gazed upon the objects before you, a voice has come upon your ear, in sweet and moving accents, saying, “ Look up with gratitude and love to your heavenly benefactor—break off all your sins, and from this hour commence a new and holy life.” Did you immediately obey that heavenly voice : or rather, did you not say—*Go thy way for this time ?*

You have read in the word of the Lord—“ God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent”—“ My son, give me thy heart.” Has this message of God prevailed : or rather, have you not said—*Go thy way for this time ?*

The ministers of Christ have come to you and urged you to repent and turn unto the Lord. Have you heeded their call ? or rather, have you not said to them one after another, *Go thy way for this time ?* And finally, the spirit of God—how often has it come on an errand of mercy, to draw us away from the entanglements of sin, and to place our feet on the rock of eternal safety ; and yet have not some of us, up to this very hour, said to that holy messenger of God, as oft as he has knocked at the door of our heart—*Go thy way for this time ?*

It was thus with the noble auditor, in whose presence the heaven-commissioned Apostle “ reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.” As he dwelt upon these high and solemn themes, we are told that, “ Felix trembled and answered, go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”

The Roman governor before whom Paul spoke does not appear to have been angry at the liberty which the Apostle took in speaking to him with

great plainness and fidelity. He had no objections to offer to the solemn truths which had been pressed upon his heart and conscience. He virtually acknowledges that those truths were weighty, and worthy of profound and serious consideration. But he was not ready to attend to them at that time : he preferred to postpone their consideration to a future and more convenient season. Now this indefinite postponement of the matter was the ruin of Felix, as it has been of thousands of others.

I design to direct your attention, this evening, to a consideration of some of the reasons, why the business of religion should be attended to at once, rather than at any future season. Preliminary to which, I shall seek to illustrate the following propositions, which are suggested by the text.

1. That unconverted men usually admit that the business of religion is important, and worthy of their attention.

2. They declare they cannot attend to it now.

3. They calculate to attend to it at some future season.

1. Unconverted men usually admit that the business of religion is important, and worthy of their attention. No man who admits the truth of the Bible—who admits that he is living under the divine government, and that he is an accountable being, will presume to maintain the opinion, that independently of that state of moral feeling, which true religion induces, any human creature can be prepared to stand at the judgment bar of Christ. There are very few indeed whose consciences are so seared, that they will

tell you—"we do not mean to repent, and reform, and become religious before we die." On the contrary, the great mass of unconverted men calculate at some future period to attain this fitness for Heaven, which they are sensible they do not now possess. When they are pressed on the subject of the surrender of their hearts to God—when the truth, lighted up with the brightness of the fires of God's Spirit, flashes in upon the mind; when conscience, awoke from her slumbers, becomes loud and importunate in her demands; when the Holy Spirit and the Saviour knock at the door of their heart, and the minister of Christ presses them at every point to yield their souls up to God, and become his devoted people, they say, "*go thy way—go thy way.*" For ever? Oh no,—"*go thy way for this time.*" But if they did not regard religion as infinitely important, and worthy of their serious and considerate attention, why do they not dismiss the subject altogether and for ever? Why do they still purpose to attend to it at some future time? For no other reason than that there is a deep-rooted conviction in their hearts that the concerns of the undying soul are of high and everlasting importance! Could every unconverted man in this audience be as thoroughly convinced of the importance of repenting now, as he is of repenting *before he dies*, there would not be many pews in this Church in which there was not weeping and deep concern. Were I permitted to pass up and down these aisles, and from pew to pew to ask each individual by name, "Do you desire that great salvation which Christ has wrought out? Would you not shrink from the thought of going to the tribunal of God in your present unconverted



state ?” I suppose very few would say, “*No*—I care not for the salvation of Christ—I am not afraid to stand in my sins before the Almighty God of Heaven.” There is not a tongue that would not falter while speaking such words as these. But I doubt not there are many, who, did they speak the real sentiments of their hearts, would say, “*Go thy way for this time.*” I am not ready to attend to this business now, but I fully purpose to do so at some future period.” Thus will it be found, that a large class of our hearers, who are living without repentance and without Christ, are nevertheless convinced of the importance of ultimately repenting, and obtaining an interest in the Redeemer. It is to this class of hearers to whom we shall particularly appeal this evening.

2. Another idea suggested by the text, upon which we proposed to dwell a moment was—*that unconverted men were not ready to attend to their salvation now.* Nothing can be more obvious, or easily demonstrated than this. It will not be regarded as any breach of Christian charity to suppose, that there are a number of *unconverted persons* here present in this audience. Why do they not repent, and turn to the Lord ? The only reason is, that they do not wish to do so. They are not yet ready. God is ready to pardon them—the Saviour is ready to sprinkle them with the blood of cleansing—the Holy Spirit is ready to purify, and new-create their hearts—and the herald of the cross even now calls upon them to *turn and live !* But they do not turn : and why ? Because they are not ready ! The awful pit, on whose slippery brink they stand, is ready to swallow them up : and yet they are



not ready to be rescued from that perilous spot, though the hand of infinite mercy is stretched out to rescue them.

We frequently meet with those who say, "that they are ready and truly desirous to become Christians—but that they cannot." Such persons either deceive themselves, or else they are not sincere in what they say. For when the way is clearly pointed out to them, and they are urged to enter upon it without delay, they begin to make excuses, and cannot be prevailed upon to take a single step. They are told that they must pray—that they must break off their sins—that they must humble themselves before God, and surrender to him their hearts. But they cannot be prevailed upon to attempt to do any one of these. They do not like the way: it is too narrow and rugged. They wish to go to heaven, but they wish to go by some *royal road*, some *primrose path of pleasure*, where no sacrifices or difficulties are to be encountered. They wish to become Christians—but without effort, without repentance, without holiness, which is a contradiction in terms. Or, in other words, with all their desires to become Christians, when they understand how much is implied in that character, they shrink from assuming the obligations it imposes, they are unwilling to undergo the charge it demands. They would like to wear the crown, but they are unwilling to bear the cross. They would like to possess the Pearl, but they are unwilling to pay the price.

I therefore speak with entire safety, in saying, that the only reason why any man in this house remains *unconverted*, is that he does not *wish* to be converted. He may wish to be converted at some future time, but

he is neither ready nor desirous to be converted *now*. If he is, his heart would be given up to God before he leaves this sacred temple.

I have no doubt but that there may be some now present, who really believe the truth of divine revelation; who are thoroughly convinced of the necessity of conversion, and who sometimes pray to God that he will have mercy on them, and not suffer them to go down to the pit; who yet in their hearts desire to put off their salvation to some future time. This was the case with St. Augustine. He had strong convictions in early life. He often retired to pray. He used to implore God most fervently to save his soul from hell: but still he wished to live longer in sin. When his mind was under deep impressions, he would go to some secret place, and, falling down upon his knees, thus lift up his petitions before God: "Oh, merciful Jehovah, suffer me not to perish—bring me not to thy judgment bar in my sins. Before I pass into eternity wash me in the Redeemer's blood. Oh, change my heart, and convert my soul, *but not yet—not yet.*"

An instance somewhat analogous to this, fell under my own observation. A young man, after having been brought to a renunciation of all his sins, gave me the following account of himself: "I was brought up in a dwelling where the voice of morning and evening prayer was daily heard. The very atmosphere of that dwelling was holy: the sweetest examples of piety were constantly before me. Still my wicked heart turned to that which was evil. I learned much that was evil from servants and my playmates. From my earliest childhood I occasionally had serious impressions; but they usually passed away 'like the morn-

ing cloud, and early dew.' Before I had arrived at adult age, I had become truly depraved. There was one secret sin in which I indulged, that was dear to me as my right hand. I used frequently to resolve to repent, and give up all my sins, but this. I thought it was so small that God would not cast me off simply for this. I used to pray to him, and promise to serve him if he would spare me this one indulgence. I used to entreat him to convert me and save my soul, but still to allow me to retain this one sin. Blessed be his name, my eyes were opened; and I then saw I was cherishing the very spirit of rebellion, that I loved sin more than God, and that with such a state of feeling I never could be converted—that in fact I was not ready to be converted, because I was not willing to give up all my sins."

I must be permitted to dwell a moment longer on this point, to wit: That unconverted men are not ready, nor willing to be saved now. I have seen proof of this in a thousand forms. Perhaps incidents gathered from real life here furnish the best illustration. The following incident I know to be drawn from such a source: A young man whose childhood was spent amid the rural quiet of an agricultural town, was, for purposes of business, transplanted to a city. He commenced attending public worship in a church that had been recommended to him by his friends. His first letters to his friends expressed the great delight he experienced in attending upon the services of that church. The preaching was very plain, and of an arousing character. For a while his attendance was constant. No weather, nor state of health, prevented him from being in his place on the morning and afternoon of the Sab-

bath. No preacher, of whatever celebrity, could draw him away from his own church. With each succeeding sermon he was more and more delighted. But at the very moment when he was apparently becoming deeply interested in the concerns of religion, he abruptly broke off, and obtained a seat in another church; and went no more to his former place of worship. When his friends were apprised of this they were greatly astonished, and insisted upon knowing the cause. At length, with great ingenuousness, he replied: "I left my former place of worship, not because I had any less respect for the clergyman who ministers there, nor because I had any new preferences, but because I saw plainly, if I continued to go there, and hear that man preach, *I must become a Christian, and I am not ready yet.*"

No clergyman has long ministered among any people, and been faithful to them, who cannot point to several instances, where persons who have begun to feel on the subject of religion, or have become so far interested in the truth, that convictions of sin began to fasten upon their minds, and they saw they must do one of two things—become converted to God, or keep away from the place where the truth was pressed upon their attention,—have deliberately left attendance upon public worship, and sought to spend their Sabbath in some other way. They were not ready to be converted. As one message of truth came to them after another, from Sabbath to Sabbath, they continued to say, "*go thy way—go thy way;*" but inasmuch as the Spirit of God would not let the truth go away from them, but kept sounding it in their ears, they deter-



mined *they would go away* from hearing the truth, and thus the house of God was abandoned.

Many persons do not attend the prayer meeting or the weekly lecture, not because they have not leisure and opportunity—but because they are not ready to become Christians. They are not disposed to put themselves under the influence of truth.

Some are not ready to become Christians because they are engaged in a business, or are carrying it on upon principles incompatible with the holy requirements of Christianity. Others have plans of raising themselves in the world which the Gospel does not sanction. Others wish to indulge in amusements and pleasures which the Bible interdicts. All unconverted men have some reason for wishing to put off the business of religion. They are not ready yet. Their language is, “*Go thy way for this time.*”

3. And, *Thirdly*—It may safely be affirmed, that none who acknowledge the truth of the Bible, ever make up their minds to dismiss the subject of religion altogether, and for ever. *They calculate to attend to it at some future time*, “When I have a convenient season, I will send for thee.” Unconverted men, whenever their attention is called to the subject of religion, silence the rebukes of conscience, by the secret promise which they make to themselves, that they will repent before they die. They by no means feel willing to meet God as they now are. They by no means conclude to be lost. They are far from resolving to throw away the hopes of the gospel, and go down to the burning pit. *No* : they mean to be saved. They mean to become real Christians before they die. They



are looking forward to some future period, when there will be fewer difficulties in the way, and they shall feel more inclined to enter upon this work than they are at present. “*Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*” This is the fatal rock on which thousands are wrecked for eternity. There is no delusion which oftener seizes upon the human mind than this.

When men are in some degree awakened to a sense of the importance of divine things, they feel uneasy and unhappy in their minds ; and instead of going directly to the foot of the cross to obtain pardon and a title to everlasting life, they are much more inclined to seek deliverance from this painful state of feeling, by trying to get rid of their serious impressions. If through the power of the Holy Spirit, conscience continues to lift up her stern and awful voice, a usual expedient to which Satan then tempts unconverted men to resort, in order to silence this voice, is to resolve that they will seek salvation *at some future time*. It is this fearful experiment, this unsafe and hazardous postponement, that I particularly desire to dissuade my hearers from. If the considerations presented last Sunday evening aroused any to feel solicitude in relation to the subject of their Salvation, I would beseech them, by all that is dear and sacred to their souls, to consider the strong reasons which exist to urge them to attend to the work of Salvation now.

My dying hearers, I come to you to-night in the name of the Most High God to declare to you, upon the authority of his word, that pardon and everlasting life are freely offered you. We lay the pearl of great

price down at your feet. Will you accept it? We want your answer.

Are there any who will say, "Go thy way, minister ; go thy way, Holy Spirit ; go away, all ye that would lead me to Christ. *I never mean to be a Christian ?*" *No* : but doubtless there are those, who will say in their hearts, "Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." I fully intend to become religious at some future time, but I am not ready at present. These persons plainly see, that their everlasting all depends upon their submission to God, but they think that there are so many obstacles in the way, that they cannot determine to make that submission at once. They therefore intend to wait till a more auspicious moment arrives. With this class of persons I desire most affectionately and earnestly to expostulate.

Before I advance a single argument to show the folly, and guilt, and danger of the course upon which you have resolved, allow me to inquire : Have you fixed any definite time in your mind, when you will attend to this important business? Is it possible that you have determined to postpone the business of your salvation, and yet have not fixed upon any time in your own mind, when you will attend to it? Do you thus transact your worldly business? And is not the salvation of your undying soul a matter of importance enough, to secure in its behalf from you the prudence, and wise calculation, and thought, and attention, that you give every day to your ordinary business?

And yet I will venture to affirm, that there is not an individual here who has concluded to put off till a

future period, consideration of the things of eternity, that has decided, in his own mind, upon a time when he will attend to it. Need I tell a business man that affairs that are thus indefinitely postponed will never be attended to? We are certain of no time but the present. "Behold, now is the accepted time." I wish to persuade every one who has hitherto neglected the concerns of his soul, to begin to attend to them *now—to-night*. "Behold, now is the accepted time."

To defer the work of one's salvation a single hour is *absurd, dangerous, and wicked*. These several points, I shall endeavour fully to illustrate.

I. To defer the work of one's salvation a single hour is *absurd*.

We call that absurd which is contrary to reason, or contrary to some evident truth. To defer making one's peace with God—with that infinite Being, who holds every living creature in the hollow of his hand, and who has only to turn over his hand and they drop instantly into perdition—to defer making one's peace with Him, is most manifestly contrary to reason. To continue in a state of unregeneracy and sin, under the idea that this state will yield richer enjoyment, and higher pleasure than a converted state, is most manifestly contrary to the evident truth, that we can be happy, and truly blest, only in a state of peace and reconciliation with God. Let us examine some of the reasons which lead men to put off the work of their salvation.

(1.) One of those reasons that influence unconverted men, is, the secret hope that the demands

of religion will at some future time be lowered ; or, that God will consent to receive sinners on easier terms than those now offered. This expectation is built entirely upon the implied position, that we have to do with a Being who is mutable and vacillating—a Being who, if He cannot bring us to His terms, will come down to ours. Need I say that the Bible declares that these ideas are utterly erroneous ? that it bears its unqualified testimony, that God is unchangeable, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ?” Never, while He sits upon the throne of the universe, will God recede by one iota from the demands of the gospel. In the ample provisions of grace, God has done all that he ever will for the salvation of unconverted men. He has sent his Son to redeem them from death—the Holy Ghost to enlighten, renew, and change their hearts—and his ministers to call upon them to “*flee from the wrath to come.*” He tells them, if they will repent—if they will humble themselves before him—if they will break off their sins—commit their souls into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ—enter upon a new and holy life, and make it their great study and business to glorify Him, He will write their names in the Book of Life, and finally bring them to Mount Zion, with songs and everlasting joy. He will never receive them on any other terms. He is under no obligation to receive them at all. His justice would for ever stand acquitted, if he should leave every sinner to eat the fruit of his own doings.

Let this solemn truth be duly weighed by every unconverted man. As a transgressor of God’s law, you have cut yourself off from every claim to happiness and heaven. If God lets you take your own course,



you will certainly go down to the pit of everlasting wo. He is under no obligation to rescue you; he is under no obligation to receive you. You do God no favor—you put Him under no obligation, by becoming a Christian. He can do without you. Heaven will be filled with inhabitants, though you are not there. If you will not comply with God's terms, then there is but one alternative,—you must sink down into the everlasting fires of perdition! How absurd, then, is it, to put off the business of salvation, under the idea that the demands of religion will not be so high or strict, at some future period, as they are now! God requires no more now, than he will require at every future moment of your life. His demand is, "*My son, give me thy heart.*" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There never will be a time, when God will receive us on any other terms. Without true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a renewal of the heart, there is no salvation.

(2.) Another idea entertained by unconverted men, and which often leads them to put off the work of their salvation is, the belief that it will be less difficult to enter upon a religious life at some future period than at present. They calculate that the causes that are in operation around them, will continue to act, till, in some way or other, they will produce in them a greater fitness, or readiness to enter upon this work. Now, it is easily demonstrable, that the reverse of all this is true. The longer men continue in a state of impenitence, the greater difficulty will they experience, in ever turning from that state. Early life is the most favourable season in which to enter upon the duties of religion. There are peculiar



promises addressed to the young. "They that seek me early, shall find me." The farther any one advances in life, neglecting the great concerns of his soul, the more difficult will he find it to stop in his downward career, and enter the strait gate. Cares constantly multiply; habits that must be given up, are, every hour, gaining new strength; evil passions are acquiring augmented force; the affections are becoming more and more estranged from God; and the heart, every day, is growing harder and harder.

As a general principle, men, after they become advanced in life, do not feel half as much inclined to attend to the concerns of their souls, as they did in early life. In proof of this, we might refer to the fact, that men who live in impenitence till they become old and grey-headed, seldom turn to the Lord. The instances of conversion, beyond the period of fifty, are very rare. At that period, men seldom change their habits in anything; and certain it is, that the simple circumstance, that they are in the decline of life, does not, of itself, make them any more inclined to enter upon the work of salvation.

I once heard from the lips of an aged man, an affecting testimony to this very point.

He was present on an occasion when a solemn appeal was made to the young, to yield themselves up to God in the freshness of their young existence. The preacher, in the course of his remarks, observed: "That in the morning of life, we usually thought, that, as a matter of course, when we grew old, we should feel willing, ready, and desirous to attend to the things of religion. But on the contrary, when age came stealing on, we should find in our hearts the same reluc-

tance, the same backwardness, the same or greater unwillingness to commence this work, as at any former period."

As the preacher came down from the pulpit, this aged man, who was highly respectable, uniformly correct in his external deportment, and constant in his attendance upon divine service, came forward, and extending his hand to him, with much emotion, remarked: "Sir, what you said just now, is unquestionably true. I know it from my own experience. When I was young, I said to myself, I cannot give up the world now, but I will, by and bye, when I have passed the meridian of life, and begin to sink into the vale of years; then I will become a Christian; then I shall be ready to attend to the concerns of my soul. But here I am, an old man. I am not a Christian. I feel no readiness, nor disposition to enter upon the work of my salvation. In looking back, I oftentimes feel as though I would give worlds if I could be placed where I was, when I was twenty years old. There were not half as many difficulties in my path then as there are now." Though this man spake thus—and the big tears coursed down his cheek, as he gave utterance to these truths,—the emotions that were then stirred up within him passed away like the early dew. He did not turn to God; he remains unconverted; and there is fearful reason to expect that he will furnish another awful illustration of the truth, that they who put off the work of their salvation, under the belief that it will be less difficult to enter upon a religious life at some future period than at present, will die in unregeneracy and sin.

(3.) Unconverted men often persuade themselves

that sickness, or the near approach of death, will overcome the reluctance which they now feel, to attend to the concerns of their soul. They hope that if no changes around them make them ready and desirous to become religious, the near prospect of death will subdue all the opposition they feel, and attract them powerfully towards religion. This idea, however, is entirely erroneous. Were they able to analyze their own feelings, they would find that the only reason why they are not willing now to enter upon a religious life, is that they have within them that "*carnal mind* which is enmity against God." No change of situation, no external circumstances, will subdue that enmity. It is a part of the very nature of an unrenewed heart. Nothing can subdue or alter it but the power of God.

The idea that unconverted men will be willing to repent, willing to have a new heart, willing to become truly religious, when they are brought down to death's door, is altogether fallacious. It is true that when men think that they are going to die, and drop into perdition, they are often filled with alarm, and evince no little anxiety about their eternal destiny. But remove the fear of death, and all their anxiety ceases. It was not because they were willing to be religious, or that they had any real desire to love and serve God, but simply because they wished to escape devouring flames, that they then asked for prayer and religious counsel. There is no more true religion in such paroxysms of fear, than there is in the emotions cherished by the demons in the pit below. For we read that "*the devils believe and tremble.*"

I again affirm, that the simple circumstance of

death's being at hand, does not of itself render any man more willing to repent, than if it were known to be far off. I once witnessed a very melancholy exemplification of the truth of this remark. I was requested to visit a man, who was under sentence of death. He was a veteran in vice, but his career was now nearly run. He had not been brought up in ignorance of his duty. He acknowledged that he fully believed that the Scriptures were a divine revelation, that he was an accountable being, and that after death he must stand at the bar of God, and be judged for the deeds done in the body. Though spotted with crime, and on the very brink of eternity, his heart continued as hard and unmoved, as it was when success seemed to crown every lawless enterprise he undertook ; and every arm that could arrest him was held in abeyance. He was unwilling to bestow one thought upon the future. I found him lying stretched on a bundle of straw, in his dusky prison cell, trying to sleep. After I had entered, and heard the iron bolt turn upon us, and found myself locked in with this murderer, a feeling of horror for an instant crept over me. But when I saw the chain that was around his ankle, one end of which was attached to a staple in the floor, when I remembered that he was one of my own species, and one for whom Christ had died, and that he was on the brink of an awful eternity, the sentiments of compassion prevailed and overpowered every other feeling. I told him that I had come as his friend, to see if I could do anything towards guiding him to the feet of that Saviour, " whose blood cleanseth from all sin." As soon as I had told him my errand, he



immediately closed his eyes, as though determined to divert his thoughts from every serious subject.

After having spoken to him awhile, during which time he manifested the same uneasiness that I have often observed in others, when addressed personally on the subject of their souls, I said to him: "Do tell me what you think of these things? Have you repented, have you looked to God through Christ for mercy? Where do you expect to dwell through eternity—in heaven, or in hell? What is your own opinion as to this matter?" "Oh," said he, with a most chilling air of indifference, "I do not know: I have not thought much about it." His whole manner clearly showed that he felt an invincible reluctance to say anything on the subject of his future destiny. But I could not let him rest so, and therefore said: "You know that in less than three days you are to die. In three days from this time, your soul will be in Heaven or Hell—and yet, you tell me, you have not thought much about it! Will you not think about it? Will you not begin to pray, and cry unto God for mercy?"

What do you think was his reply? Turning his face from me, and pulling the piece of blanket which covered him, over his eyes, he remarked: "I have been troubled with a head-ache to-day, and I can't think much about this now." This was all that could be drawn from him; though in less than three days he was to be in eternity, he felt just the same reluctance and unwillingness to think about a preparation, as he had done in the early part of his course.

This instance shows that the near approach of death does not change one's heart, or make him any more willing to love God. He, therefore, who puts off his



salvation, under the idea that a more convenient season will arrive, acts contrary to the plainest dictates of reason. Such a season will never come. The same reasons that incline him to wish to defer this business to-day, will operate with equal force to-morrow, and the next day, and the next week, and the next year, till all his years, and weeks, and days are gone, and he is in eternity, with the whole load of his sins upon him! To exhibit still farther the absurdity of postponing the work of salvation, consider for a moment, what this is, which reason, and conscience, and God urge upon your immediate acceptance? What is this which unconverted men are so unwilling to accept? *It is an everlasting friendship with the Most High.* The great God of Heaven offers to receive you as his child, to blot out all your sins, to write your name in the Book of life, and to make you the recipient of that heavenly grace, which will assimilate your nature with *his*, and finally conduct you to the eternal mount of blessedness.

But you reply to God and say, “No, not yet—I cannot consent to have this friendship yet. I cannot consent to have my sins blotted out yet. I cannot consent to have my name written in the Book of life to-night. This converting grace must not be imparted to me now. Let me live a few years longer without God in the world. ‘*Go thy way for this time.*’ ” This is the very language which every man, who concludes to delay repentance, is uttering in the ear of Jehovah! And does it not in truth appear like madness?

Again: In our last discourse we saw that unconverted men were under present condemnation, and that every step they took was conducting them on-

ward towards the gates of perdition. To put off the work of salvation, then, is virtually to say, “ I know that the wrath of God rests upon me. I know, unless it is withdrawn, and turned away, it will fill me with anguish indescribable through eternity : it will be like the fervid heat of a furnace, scorching and burning up my soul ! I know that God offers to remove from me this wrath *now*—but I am not yet ready to have him do so. I know, that every step I take, brings me nearer and nearer to the pit of perdition, and that I am liable every instant to step off into a ruined eternity—but I wish to go on a little farther before I turn.” This is what every unconverted man is daily saying. Are not such views and conduct absurd ?

I shall not be able to complete the illustration of this point this evening. The subject will be pursued in the next discourse : in which I shall also attempt to show that to defer one’s salvation a single hour is both *dangerous and wicked*. But have I not already convinced you, my hearer, that it is the best and safest course to seek salvation now ?

Do not forget that before I am permitted to pursue my argument next Sunday evening, your day of grace may be over, and your doom sealed up for eternity. Will you not then “ seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near ? ”

Grant, O merciful God, that as thine holy Apostle St. James, leaving his father and all that he had, *without delay*, was obedient unto the calling of thy Son, Jesus Christ, and followed him ; so we, being solemnly called by the same Saviour to immediate repent-

ance, may we heed this call—forsake all carnal and worldly affections—be evermore ready to follow thy holy commandments, and steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## DISCOURSE IV.

### THE ABSURDITY, DANGER AND GUILT OF PROCRASTINATION IN RELIGION.

“Behold, now is the accepted time.”—2 Cor., vi. 2.

“Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”—Acts, xxiv. 25.

THE population of Earth is made up of two great divisions; the one are the pardoned, justified, regenerate children of God, whom He is conducting to the celestial city; the other, the unconverted and impenitent, who are condemned already, and are under sentence of everlasting exclusion from the kingdom of glory. To this latter division, however, a message has been sent from the throne of God Himself, bearing upon it His seal and signature, assuring them, that if they will stop in their career of disobedience, and embrace Christ immediately as their Saviour, he will remove the sentence of condemnation that hangs over their souls, and receive them into favour. He makes no promise for any future period, but *to-day—at this time—now*, he will confer this great blessing upon them. Hence, he sends forth his ambassadors to proclaim, in the language of the text, “*Behold, now is the accepted time.*” Whoever wishes to have all his sins blotted out—whoever wishes to be

made holy, and have all the joys of heaven eternally secured to him, has an opportunity now.

Such is the message that I have to deliver to you this evening. The gates of heaven are wide open to receive you. God, bending from his eternal throne, is now *waiting* to be gracious. All things in heaven and on earth are ready. Behold, now is the accepted time! What say you? Will you have everlasting life *now*? Will you have your name enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life to-night? What answer shall I carry back to that Eternal Being, on whose errand I come? Ah! do you say to me, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee?" Then must we pursue the topic under consideration last Sunday evening—the *reasons why the business of religion should be attended to at once, rather than at any future period.*

The position was laid down in the preceding discourse, "that to defer the work of one's salvation a single hour, was *absurd, dangerous, and wicked.*" We advanced a variety of considerations, to show the absurdity of such a step; although we did not complete the illustration. We purpose, this evening, to go on with this illustration, and also, to show the *danger* and *guilt* of procrastination in religion. May that Eternal Spirit, who alone can effectually open the ear and touch the heart, overshadow this assembly, while I attempt to speak upon these points!

1. To recur, then, to the topic which has been partially considered, I again affirm, "That to defer the work of one's salvation a single hour, is *absurd.*" Similar conduct in the management of one's worldly



affairs would be unhesitatingly pronounced *absurd*. What man is there that visits the Exchange, or that is engaged in traffic, if an offer were made to him by way of bargain, by which he was absolutely certain that he could become independently rich—by which he would be put into possession of immense resources, so that he could ever after live in ease, and have the means of promoting, to almost any extent, the happiness of his species, and the great interests of Christian benevolence, that would not immediately accept such an offer? Who is there that would reject this offer, upon the slender probability that it might at some future time be made again? And should any one reject such an offer upon such a probability, who would not regard that man as absolutely beside himself?

But here is an offer which confers a kingdom—a crown; which confers unsearchable riches, endless life, all the glories of heaven. It is an offer made to every man in this temple, and may never be made again. In reference to this offer, God Himself says, “Behold, now is the accepted time!” And yet, unconverted men say, “We are not ready to close in with this offer yet; go thy way for this time—when we have a convenient season, we will call for thee.” What shall we think of such conduct?

Again. Here is a man who has been engaged in an extensive business, by means of which a tide of wealth seemed to be rolling in upon him. But at the very height of his prosperity, an untoward event changed the whole aspect of his affairs. This was the commencement of a series of misfortunes, by which all that he had, has been brought under judgments and liens, and he has before him not only the

prospect of bankruptcy, but of utter destitution and want. His principal creditor, and one who holds by far the largest number of the judgment-bonds upon his estate, is a very wealthy man. He is now on his dying bed. He may not live a day or an hour longer. This dying creditor sends a message to this unfortunate man, stating to him, that if he will visit him and bring along a proper officer to draw up an instrument of release, he will sign with his dying hand that instrument, which will relieve him from all his present embarrassments, and leave him in possession of all his former property. Now, what would you think of this debtor, if he should say to the messenger who brought him this intelligence, "This is a most generous offer; it is precisely what I want. But I am so busy now I cannot attend to it. To-morrow, or next week, or next year, I hope to have more leisure, and then I shall be better prepared to attend to this matter. Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Who would not think such a man beside himself, and such conduct perfect madness? But would there be as much absurdity in such conduct, as there is in that man's, who, by breaking the divine law, has become an infinite debtor to God; who has nothing to pay, and is therefore under sentence of everlasting banishment from the presence of God; is actually doomed to be shut up for ever in the dark prison-house of endless despair, and to whom Jehovah has sent an offer of entire release, upon the most simple and easy conditions, if it is accepted at once. And yet this man says to the messenger of the Lord, "I am not prepared to attend to this business now: go thy way

for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”

Allow me to introduce still another illustration, to show the great absurdity of putting off one's salvation. There is not too much time, in the longest life, in which to secure heaven. Jehovah allots to no individual of the race, more time than is barely sufficient to fulfil this great end of his being. For a man to have spent *twenty, thirty, or forty* years of his life without having taken a single step towards heaven, is an alarming consideration of itself. But this is the situation of every one who has arrived at the age of *twenty, thirty, or forty*, UNCONVERTED. Until the sinner is converted, he is travelling, every moment, away from God and from heaven. To have spent, then, twenty, thirty, or forty years of one's life without having commenced the work of salvation; and, at that period of life, instead of turning immediately to God, to resolve to put off repentance to some future unknown time, and that, too, when it is admitted that the whole of life affords little time enough, in which

“To 'scape from hell, and fly to heaven !”

Is not this folly—insanity—madness? Should we not think so, were we to witness a similar course of conduct in reference to secular matters ?

On a summer afternoon you break away from your cares and engagements, and leave the dust, and din, and heat of the city, to inhale, for a few hours, the pure and balmy air of the country. While you move on, amid the quiet and peaceful scenes that stretch around you, your eye feasted, at every step, with some new object of interest in the landscape that lies

so sweetly spread out before you, and your ear regaled with the rich melody that comes floating on every passing breeze, from the feathered songsters of the grove, you overtake a man on foot, walking at a very rapid rate. It seems to you that he is anxious to place the greatest possible distance between himself and the city, in the least possible time. But as you come up, he stops and inquires the road that leads to *Philadelphia*. You point it out to him. He tells you a tale that awakens all the kindest sympathies of your heart. He has an only son. That son has been apprehended, and put upon trial for a capital offence. All the circumstances seem against him; but he, his father, can bring forward facts that will show his entire innocence. The court is now in session, and the trial going on. The decision will probably be made, and sentence pronounced in less than two hours. Unless the father reaches the city before the expiration of that time, his son will be condemned to die. He declares that he would not fail of reaching the court room in time, for worlds.

Now what would you think of this man, if after you had pointed out to him the road that led to the city, he should instantly start off in an opposite direction, and when you called after him, and assured him that he was going the wrong way—that every step he took was conducting him farther and farther from the place where he would be, he should answer, “I know it—I know it! It is infinitely important that I should be in *Philadelphia*, in less than two hours. The life of my child depends upon it. I have hardly time even now to reach there: but still I feel anxious to go on in this contrary direction a little farther.”



What would you think of that man? Would you not conclude at once that he was deranged? And does not every unconverted man who puts off his salvation a single hour, exhibit the same evidence of insanity? He is acting precisely the part of the man in the instance we have supposed.

2. *Secondly*, I remark that to defer the work of ones' salvation a single hour is not only *absurd*, but it is DANGEROUS. This appears most manifest from several of the illustrations to which your attention has been already called. There are other considerations, however, which will exhibit this point in a still clearer light.

(1.) It is one of the devices of Satan, to prompt unconverted men to *resolve* to repent and become Christians at a future period. They resolve now, but the resolution relates to a future time. Hence, we say, that if the time in which to attend to this business, is not the present time—if the resolution contemplates even to-morrow—such a resolution may be the ruin of the soul.

A striking illustration is given of this, by the incidents connected with the early death of an interesting young lady, as related by her pastor, a highly respectable clergyman now living.

This young lady was highly cultivated, buoyant in spirit, beautiful in person, the pride of her parents, the ornament of her circle, and the admiration of all who knew her. While in the May morning of life, her mind became solemnly impressed, and she felt that it was unsafe to continue in the neglect of religion any longer. One morning, especially, the first



impression upon her mind as she awoke, was, that she must embrace religion *THEN*, and that her soul was in imminent danger of being lost if she delayed. She saw herself as she expressed it, “to be a great sinner in the hands of a God of justice”—saw that there was no hope but in Jesus Christ, that in Christ there was a full, and complete salvation—that He was ready and willing to receive her *then*, and that delay would probably be fatal to her soul.” She deliberated; she reasoned—she prayed, and finally made up her mind to the deliberate *RESOLUTION*, that she would repent and accept the offer of salvation before the close of *that day*. This resolution was, as she believed, the solemn and deliberate purpose of her soul, and she felt a degree of satisfaction in the thought that the question of her eternal salvation was now so near a final and favourable adjustment. But the day had its cares and its pleasures; business and company filled up its hours; and the night found her as thoughtless, almost, as she had been for months. The next morning her impressions were renewed, and another resolution was formed *to begin religion before the close of that day*. This day passed as the one previous. And thus day after day were resolutions made and broken, till all her seriousness passed away. A few months only elapsed before she was laid upon a sick and dying bed. Her pastor, on the day of her death, was called to visit her at the early dawn of morning. He remarks, “She then saw herself a hardened sinner in the hands of God—impenitent, unpardoned, without hope, at the very gate of death—her Saviour slighted, the spirit grieved and gone, and the judgment, with its tremendous retributions, just before

her. Most of the morning was spent either in prayer at her bedside, or in attempting to guide her to the Saviour; but all seemed ineffectual. Her strength was now nearly gone, vital action was no longer perceptible at the extremities, the cold death sweat was gathering on her brow, and dread despair seemed ready to possess her soul. She saw, and we all saw, that the fatal moment was at hand, and her future prospect one of unmingled horror. She shrunk from it. She turned her eye to me, and called on all who stood around her, to beseech once more the God of mercy in her behalf.

“Turning at one time to her distressed father, as he sat beside her, watching the changes of her countenance, she said with a look, such as parents alone can understand, ‘Oh, my dear father, can’t you help me? Can’t you keep me alive a little longer? Oh, pray for me—pray for me!’ We all knelt again at her bedside, and having once more commended her to God,” continues her Pastor, “I tried again to direct her to her Saviour; and was beginning to repeat some promises which I thought appropriate, when she interrupted me, saying, with emphasis, *She could not be pardoned—it was too late, too late.* Alluding to her fatal resolution, she begged of me to charge all the youth of my congregation not to neglect religion as she had done—not to stifle their convictions by a *mere resolution* to repent. ‘Warn them—warn them,’ said she, ‘by my case.’ Her voice now became inarticulate, the dimness of death was settling upon her eyes, which now and then, in a frantic stare, told of agonies that the tongue could not express. Soon

the last convulsive struggle closed the scene, and her spirit took its everlasting flight."

Unconverted hearer, do you think there is no danger, that your resolution to repent at some future time may not delude you in a similar manner, and finally plunge you into irremediable ruin? Beware, you stand on a fearful precipice. If you wish to be rescued, repent and turn to God immediately. Behold, now is the accepted time.

(2.) Another proof that to defer the work of one's salvation for a single hour is dangerous, may be drawn from *the great uncertainty of life*. We know not what a day will bring forth.

If you defer your repentance to some indefinite future time, you will never feel that the time has come. If you say—"I will repent in my last sickness," your last sickness may not be thought dangerous, till at the very moment of your dissolution; your last sickness may be so violent, you can have no thoughts except about the pains and agony of your dying body; *it* may be accompanied with delirium; you may die in a fit, life may be extinguished in a moment. And even should all things be most favorable, an awful uncertainty would hang over your destiny. Oh, how many of these death-bed repentances will be found vain and hollow at the judgment hour!

It is really melancholy to see on what slight grounds surviving friends build their hopes in reference to their deceased relatives. Because they uttered some incoherent words, that seemed like prayer, or penitential confession, at the last gasp of expiring nature, the hope is eagerly seized upon, that they have gone to glory. Though this may seem *kind* to-

wards the dead, whose state, however, cannot be altered by our views, it is certainly *cruel* towards the living. It is leading hundreds to lean upon a broken reed. Is the man, who lies on his dying bed, racked with pain, and gasping for breath, in a fit state to look over his business accounts, and adjust his worldly affairs? Were those with whom he has transacted business, to bring in their accounts, and ask him to attend to them—what could he do? He could not collect his thoughts sufficiently to add up a single column of figures! Is this man, then, I ask, in a fit state at this moment to settle his accounts with the great God of Heaven, whom he has neglected all his life? These accounts with his Creator reach from that period in his history when he began to be a moral agent up to the present moment, and they have never been adjusted. If he goes to the judgment bar, leaving them in this state, he will be ruined for eternity. And how can he attend to them now, when the last sands of life are just running out?

A proof that death-bed repentances are very little to be relied upon, may be gathered from the fact, that in the great majority of instances, where the best evidence is given of genuine repentance, if the patient is unexpectedly raised up from the border of the grave, with returning health, he returns to the world and his sins; and the instances are not few, where persons have seemed to give, upon a sick bed, the most decisive evidence of a change of heart—have conversed freely in relation to the joys of salvation, and have gone so far as to receive the holy Communion, who, when restored to health, have retained no recollection of any of these things. Does not all this show, that



that man who deliberately resolves to put off his repentance till his last sickness, is in a situation no less perilous than that of the sailor who goes to sleep upon the mast head in a storm ?

If you say, “I will attend to religion when I have accumulated so much property—when I have accomplished such and such an object”—do you not know that before that time you may be in eternity ? Is not that *wise* counsel, which bids you, “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ?”

Do you depend upon youth, or vigorous health, for long life ? These are no security. Are there not hundreds of the young, whom you have known, and all of whom had as good prospects of life as you—now in their graves ? The burial places for the dead are filled with those who fell in the midst of youth and health, who were cut down in the morning of life—in the freshness of their young being. Just like you, they expected that death was far off, and that they had a long time to stay on the earth. Had the minister of Christ gone to the place of their business, or their houses, but a week before their last sickness, and urged upon them immediate repentance, they would have thought his anxiety uncalled for, and unnecessary. But at that very moment the destroyer was holding his arrow to the string with deadly aim. Soon that arrow flew with fatal issue. You attended their funerals. You saw them committed to the dust ! Would it be strange, if within one week, you should fall, precisely in the same way ? Are you sure that the seeds of disease are not now lodged in your body, and at work in your veins ? Are you sure that you will ever again be capable of hearing, or thinking, if

you neglect attending to your salvation to-night? Is not the future altogether uncertain? Would you be willing to put your temporal interests into jeopardy like that to which your soul is every instant exposed? Would you be willing to forego such a golden opportunity of bettering your fortune, as is now offered for saving your soul?

Should a ship come up the river freighted with immense treasures, and its owner offer as much gold to every individual who would come to the wharf, as he could carry away, who would say, "I will not go to-day. To-morrow, or next week, or some months hence, will answer as well?" But when Christ comes here and sends out his messengers, and tells you that if you will draw nigh, he will give you "unsearchable riches," he will give you that which is "more precious than rubies," and of more value than silver or gold, even "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," you say to him and his messengers—"go thy way for this time." You deliberately conclude that you will defer receiving these heavenly riches till a more convenient season. Your houses, your stores, your merchandise, your factories, your shipping must be *insured*: but *your souls—your souls*, you have *no insurance* on them. And yet there is far greater probability that you will die within the coming year, than that your store will burn down! If *it* does burn down, you will not be a sufferer to any great extent, for you have had the prudence and taken the precaution to get an insurance upon it. But if you die, your soul sinks down into the bottomless pit! Every unconverted man in

this house is in danger of dropping into the bottomless pit before to-morrow morning.

The impenitent sinner has nothing to depend upon to keep him out of perdition one day, or one night. We know not what a day may bring forth. God has not promised to spare unconverted men one day. He is every day angry with them. The black clouds that are full of the thunder of God's wrath hang over their heads every day : and they know not how soon that thunder will break forth upon them ! They walk in slippery places ; and they know not when their feet will slip. They hang over the awful pit, as it were by a thread ; this thread hath a moth continually gnawing it ; and they know not when it will snap in twain, and let them drop. They are not secure one moment. They never go to sleep, but they are in danger of awaking in the flames of perdition.\* There is not an unconverted person in this house, that is not liable, at any moment, to be summoned to the judgment bar. That moment, ere long, will speedily come ; and probably it will come when least expected. And then, " to be surprised into the presence of a forgotten God, to be torn away at once from a world to which your whole heart and soul have been riveted—a world which has engrossed all your thoughts and cares—all your desires and pursuits, and to be fixed in a state upon which you cannot now be prevailed upon to bestow a single thought, and for which you will not make any preparation."† What a catastrophe must this be ! Will you, by delaying the work of your salvation, make this hazardous experiment, and run this tremendous risk ?

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\* See Pres. Edwards' Works, vol. 8, p. 24.      † Doddridge, p. 36.

(3.) Again : To defer one's salvation a single hour, is dangerous on account of the uncertainty of any future opportunity of salvation even if life is prolonged. Every unconverted man in this audience has resisted the Spirit of God ; if he had not, he would not now be in an unconverted state. The Spirit has drawn him, but he would not yield. The very resistance which he has made to keep his stand upon impenitent ground has hardened his heart, and increased the inveteracy of his spiritual malady. The difficulty in the way of all impenitent persons in turning to God is thus continually increasing. It requires a more powerful operation of divine grace upon their soul to turn them now, than was necessary at the beginning of their course. Every time they resist the Holy Spirit, they harden their hearts more and more ; and render it necessary for God to make a still greater effort in order to save them. But will he do this ? Has he given them any promise that he will ? No : but everything to the contrary. " My Spirit shall not always strive with man." " He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that *without remedy*."

Unconverted hearer, I doubt not that the Spirit of God is now moving, in some measure, upon your heart ! Who can tell whether this be not the last drawing that you will ever feel ? Who can tell but what God this very night " will swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest ?" I have been trying to convince you, that you may die at any moment ; and this you cannot but admit. Can you think of anything more terrible than to go into eternity just as you now are, *impenitent and unpardoned* ? Yes : I can tell you



of one thing more dreadful than immediate death, or immediate perdition ! It is this : To have God declare, in reference to you, “ As for that wretched being who has so long trifled with me, and provoked me—let him still *live*. Let him live in the midst of prosperity and plenty. Let him live under the most powerful ordinances of the Gospel, too : and having abused them, he will die under seven fold more guilt, and a seven fold greater curse. I will give him no more grace to think of his ways for a single moment.” And thus he will go on from bad to worse, filling up the measure of his iniquities, till death and destruction seize him in an unexpected hour, and wrath come upon him to the uttermost.\*

I fear this is not an uncommon case. I fear there are few congregations where the word of God has been faithfully preached, and where it has been long neglected and despised, especially by such as have once been awakened, in which there are not some persons in this situation ! It is true it is impossible for us to say who they are, but the eye of God beholds them, and they are written down in his book, as those who have sinned away their day of grace.

Unconverted hearer, have you any security if you put off repentance another hour, you will not grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause him for ever to depart from you ? Have you any security, if you refuse to repent to-night, that God will not withdraw his grace, and give you up to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind ? Already your day of grace may be nearly spent ! It may terminate before the dawn of another

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\* Doddridge, p. 38.

morning, and here you are putting off repentance to a more convenient season ! In the words of Doddridge, I would say, “ If you delay any longer, the time will come when you will bitterly repent of this delay, and either lament it before God in the anguish of your heart here, or curse your own folly and madness in Hell ! Yea, when you will wish, that dreadful as hell is, you had rather fallen into it sooner, than have lived in the midst of so many abused mercies, to render the degrees of your punishment more insupportable, and your sense of it more exquisitely tormenting ! ”

I do therefore earnestly exhort you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the worth of your immortal and perishing soul, that you delay not a day, nor an hour longer. Even *now* turn unto the Lord—before you leave this house—before you leave the pew where you are now sitting.

3. And finally, I remark, that to delay the work of one’s salvation a single hour, is not only *absurd* and *dangerous*, but involves a dreadful amount of *guilt*. To delay one’s repentance is to come to the deliberate determination to continue in rebellion against God. It is in fact an express declaration to Jehovah on the part of unconverted men, that they think that the world can make them happier than He : and that in order to enjoy the world, and live in sin and disobedience, they are willing to incur his displeasure ; that upon the whole they had rather run the risk of losing Heaven, and the favour of God, than be converted now !

Every unconverted man, who has not made up his mind to turn immediately to the Lord, means to live

in rebellion against God just as long as he can without dropping into perdition. And was there no burning gulf of endless wo, he would never think of turning to God. Was there no death, he would never think of repenting ! Is there no guilt in all this ? Oh, what a wicked heart the unconverted sinner has ! What an awful amount of guilt attaches itself to this purpose of his to delay coming to God ! By it, he is virtually saying to the Most High, “ Thou everlasting Jehovah, who didst call me into being ; who hast upholden me ever since I was born by thy hand, and who demandest of me my love and obedience : I have no love for thee. I hate thy government. I will never submit to it till compelled to. The agonies and death of Jesus Christ make no impression on my heart. I wish to live longer in sin. I think it will make me happier than God or Christ can. I wish there was no death—no Hell ; then I would live for ever in sin ; but as death and hell are in my path, when I can enjoy the world no longer, when I can proceed no farther in rebellion without plunging down into the fiery abyss, I will then attend to religion and save my soul.” This, in point of fact, is the language of every unconverted man, who is putting off the concerns of religion to some future convenient season. Oh, surely here is *sin*—here is guilt unparalleled ! The very determination to delay is an insult to Jehovah. He sends to you a message containing offers of pardon and life. He bids the messenger accompany the message with the declaration, “ Behold, now is the accepted time !” But you say to God’s messenger, “ Go thy way for this time. I have more important matters to attend to at present than this.” Ah ! deluded man, what

more important business can there be than the salvation of your immortal soul ?

But you say, you mean to attend to it at some future time—Go thy way *for this time*. Ah ! do you not recollect THE FATAL RESOLUTION of that lost one, to whom I have referred, this evening ? That unhappy person only resolved to delay till the close of the day. She delayed the consecration of herself to God till evening, and the consequence was, the Holy Spirit left her, and she died in despair.

Oh ! that you would but consider the awful guilt that attaches itself to this delay of repentance. What can be more displeasing to God than, when he says, “ Behold, *now* is the accepted time,” you should reply, and say, “ Go thy way for this time.”

My dying friends, consider, I entreat you, the whole guilt and danger of your situation. Consider whose messenger and message it is you slight ! By refusing to accept of salvation now—by resolving to defer your repentance—you challenge Jehovah to empty his wrath upon you ! Oh ! that you did but know what a state that soul is in, which hath arrayed the everlasting God against it ! The word of His mouth that made thee, can unmake thee ! The frown of His face will blight thy very being. Oh ! if God be against thee, all things are against thee. This world, however much thou lovest it, is but thy prison ; thou art only reserved in it to the day of wrath. The Judge is coming ! Thy soul is even now moving onward to the fearful tribunal ! In a short time, and thy friends shall say of thee, “ *He is dead ;*” and then thou shalt see the things that thou dost despise, and feel that which thou wilt not now believe !



Unconverted man, death will bring thee such an argument as thou canst not answer ; an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the *word* and *ways* of God ! Then how soon will thy mind be changed ! Be an unbeliever, then, if thou canst ! Stand, then, to all thy former words, which thou wast wont to utter against a holy and a heavenly life ! Make good that cause before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against his ministers and people ! In that hour stand up before the Judge, and plead for thy pleasures and worldly indulgences. But know that thou wilt have one to plead with, before whom the rocks melt, and the earth shakes to its centre.\*

Oh, poor unconverted soul ! there is nothing but a thin veil of flesh between thee and this amazing sight, which will silence all thy excuses and objections, and quickly change thy tone. This veil, death will lift up, and then the awful scene will instantly burst upon thy view ! And, oh ! how quickly will death come and do his work ! When thou hast had a few more merry hours—a few more pleasant draughts of earthly delight ; when thou hast drawn around thee a few more of the honours of the world, a little more of the riches, thy portion will be spent, thy pleasures ended, and all, for which thou hast bartered thy soul, will be gone for ever ! The day of reckoning will then come ! It is even now coming ; no post is more swift, no messenger more sure !

The sum of the whole matter, then, is this : that all who mean to save their souls, must do it now ; that the delay of this work is *absurd*, *dangerous*, and

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\* See Baxter.

*wicked*; that it is trifling with God and our best interests; that those who postpone this repentance to some indefinite future time, do, in fact, set God at defiance, and relinquish all claims to eternal life.

My hearers, what is your determination? I do not ask whether you mean to repent at some future time, but will you attend to your soul's salvation now? With all these considerations before you, what is your decision? Will you attend to the concerns of eternity now? Remember, the eye of God is on you; and you will be reminded of these appeals at the judgment seat! What is your decision? what answer will you return? Here we stand in the name of God to receive your reply! Will you be saved? Will you give up your hearts to God? The heart of every unconverted man has replied, *yes*, or *no*! God heard that reply. He will write it down in the Book of His remembrance. If you say, "*Go thy way*," then we leave you. God says, in reference to you, "*Let him alone*," let him alone! The Spirit, stretching his wings to take his everlasting flight, says, "*Let him alone*," let him alone! Oh sinner, sinner! how can I leave you? God is about leaving you, and the Spirit is about leaving you! Will you not, then, oh! will you not decide now, to flee from the wrath to come?

Unconverted friends, what is your decision? Will you send me away in sorrow? Will you send me back, in bitterness of spirit, to the feet of that Eternal Being, on whose errand I have come, to say to him, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Will you not decide to enter upon a religious life now? If so, do

not leave that pew where you sit, till you have promised this to the everlasting God. He bends upon His eternal throne to receive your promise. Whatever you have decided upon, the intelligence has gone up to heaven. Hark! hark, what new sounds it circulates there! Sinner, do you not hear them? Listen to conscience, the voice of God within you, and *that* will repeat the echo.

The Discourse for next Sunday evening, from its connection with what will follow, will treat of a subject, perhaps decidedly the most important in the whole series.

## DISCOURSE V.

### THE SINNER MUST BE CONVINCED OF SIN.

“How canst thou say, I am not polluted.”

JER. ii. 23.

THE very idea of *conversion* implies a change from one state to another. This term, as ordinarily used in theology, denotes *the act of turning from sin to holiness*. Nothing, therefore, can be more obvious than that men must be convinced of their *sinfulness*, before they can be *turned* from it, or *converted*. If we should succeed ever so well in convincing men of the importance of religion, and of the claims it has upon their immediate attention, it would be followed with no permanent valuable results, unless we could fasten upon their minds a conviction of their own exceeding sinfulness in the sight of God. Men will never be converted—they will never turn from their sins, till they see how guilty they are, and how bitter and evil a thing it is to sin against God. Hence the present and following discourse will be directed to this one point,—to show the awful guilt and exceeding sinfulness of every person who lives in an unconverted state.

I am well aware that this is not a pleasant theme. There is nothing from which the human heart so instinctively shrinks as that of being made to feel



conscious of its own guilt. An attempt to force this state of feeling upon the heart and conscience, though it be by pressing home the truth of God, is often regarded as unkind, and evincive of an unamiable and censorious spirit. Unconverted men are exceedingly unwilling to believe that they are *very sinful*. When they are fully and plainly told this—when all the sin and guilt, with which the Bible charges them, is laid at their door—when they are told that until converted they can never take a single step towards heaven, but, on the other hand, are constantly advancing in the downward path—that until their hearts are changed, and they are created anew in Christ Jesus, with all their attempts at external reformation, they are constantly growing worse and worse, and hourly provoking God more and more; so that in truth they hang suspended, every moment they live, by a single hair, over the gaping gulf of endless perdition—when these representations are made of their exceeding sinfulness, they feel *wronged*. They think that the degree of their guilt is exaggerated, and the picture entirely overdrawn. If all this had been alleged against the notoriously wicked, the profane, the profligate, and the abandoned, they would have fully assented to its correctness. But when it is affirmed of those who are kind fathers, affectionate husbands, and every way estimable citizens—persons who are charitable to the poor, honest in their dealings, cherishing a high respect for religion, and, as far as can be seen, exemplary in their conduct, they feel that such statements are an entire exaggeration of the matter. But, *there* it stands, engraven on the page of

eternal truth, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

Unconverted men, with whatever external decorum of morality they may have adorned themselves, will find, when they come to stand at the judgment bar, that they are infinitely more wicked than they were ever represented.

It would be far more delightful to me to preach to Christians—far more congenial to my feelings to speak continually of the love of God—to point the believer's eye to the gemmed crowns and golden harps around the throne, and to that glorious "*rest which remaineth for the people of God!*" But, in the mean time, what would become of unconverted sinners? They would go down to irremediable wo!

Christ came into the world to save sinners. He hath sent forth His messengers on the express errand of publishing to all lands and to all classes of people, that *they must be born again*. He bids the heralds of the Cross to lift up their voices, and proclaim to men their transgression and their sin. There is, therefore, no alternative: necessity is laid upon us to speak out the whole truth. We have sworn before high heaven that we will declare the whole truth, and keep back nothing. If we do not take this course,—if, on the other hand, we prophesy smooth things, and say peace, peace, when there is no peace; and thus lead men along in a pleasant and flowery path, we perjure our own souls, and land our unconverted hearers in perdition.

I should be afraid to die—I should be afraid to go to the judgment bar, if I had knowingly kept back anything in which the eternal happiness of my hear-

ers was involved. My earnest wish—my sincere prayer to God is, that all who are here before me—all who tread the courts of this sacred temple, may be eternally happy in heaven. But, unconverted friend, you can never enter heaven, unless you receive the truth as it is in Jesus. This truth, it is my duty to proclaim; and, having done so, if it is rejected, yours will be the guilt.

It is my intention to represent unconverted men just as sinful as the word of God represents them; and this word appeals to each one of them in the language of the text, “How canst thou say, I am not polluted?” The text was addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, charging them with guilt, principally upon the ground of their having forsaken God, and substituted in His place another object of supreme regard. To this charge they were not disposed to plead guilty, but sought to assert their innocence by offering a variety of excuses for their conduct. But in reply to all these vain attempts to clear themselves, God said, “Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me. How canst thou say, I am not polluted.” You see the inquiry is not, *how sinful we appear to men*, but *how sinful we appear in the eye of a holy God!* That declaration of the Saviour, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” plainly intimates, that every unregenerate man has so much guilt resting upon his soul, that he could not be admitted into heaven in his present state, without such a surrender of principle, as would ultimately overturn the whole empire of God. Impenitent men do not understand this; they do not think that

they are so guilty and depraved ; or, if they admit it in theory, it is a truth which does not impress or deeply affect their hearts.

Here, then, is a controversy between God and sinners. This is the attitude in which all unconverted men stand. The Most High has brought against every one of you, unconverted friends, an indictment, containing charges of such a serious character, that if substantiated, your hopes are all crushed. To these charges you are not ready to plead *guilty*. I appear before you as the advocate of Jehovah, and with Paul I would say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." And here, in the presence of Jehovah, and in the face of the whole universe, I would ask of each one of you, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted?"

"Hear ye now what the Lord saith, 'Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.' Hear ye, oh mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth : for the Lord hath a controversy with his people. Oh, my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? *Testify against me.*"

The Eternal Sovereign here offers to descend from his tribunal to account for his conduct, and submit himself to the judgment of his creatures. Decline not, then, unconverted man, this condescending overture of the Almighty. Order your cause ; fill your mouth with strong arguments, and state your strong reasons why you ought not to be condemned for ever. God invites you to testify against him.

In order to form a just conclusion, whether you have any ground for complaint, it will be necessary to glance at the system of government under which



you are living. In order to ascertain whether the indictment brought against you by Jehovah will stand, it becomes necessary to look at the law which he has appointed for the rule of human action, to see what the character of that law is, and how your conduct accords with its requirements. To these considerations we now invite your attention.

1. *First*, the system of government, under which God's moral and intelligent creatures are placed. *They are placed under a moral government.* God created us for a glorious end. He purposes to lead us to the accomplishment of that end by motives addressed to the understanding. This is what we mean by moral government.

God governs things according to their nature. He manages the sea, and regulates the planets by physical force. He controls the various tribes of animals by the laws of instinct. But man, who is an intelligent and rational being, he governs by the presentation of motives to influence his will. The divine law furnishes man with a rule to regulate his conduct towards the whole universe. "This law surrounds him with rich and copious exhibitions of reasons, motives, and allurements, to lead him to the formation of a good character, and to the choice of a wise course of conduct. It *forces* him to nothing, but leaves him perfectly free. He is free from everything except from the moral obligation to do good, and from accountability to God if he do wrong." This law of course has its sanctions. All law from its very nature must necessarily have the sanctions of rewards and penalties. Without these, a law would be a mere advice,

a recommendation only, and of no authority. The penalty of the divine law is incurred by breaking the law, and its reward secured by keeping it. This is the original constitution of that government, under which the human race was placed. Can you find any fault with this arrangement. It is true that you are capable of sinning, or breaking his law. But will you blame God on this account? You might just as well blame him for having made you a rational and moral being.

The great and sainted Edwards justly remarks: "It is *unreasonable* to suppose that God should be obliged, if he makes a reasonable creature, capable of knowing his will, and receiving a law from him, and being subject to his moral government, at the same time to make it *impossible* for him to sin, or break his law. For if God be obliged to this, it destroys all use of any commands, laws, promises, or threatenings, and the notion of any moral government of God over those reasonable creatures. For to what purpose would it be for God to give such and such laws, and declare his holy will to a creature, and annex promises and threatenings to move him to his duty, and make him careful to perform it, if the creature at the same time has this to think of, that God is obliged to make it *impossible* for him to break his laws? How can God's threatenings move to care or watchfulness, when at the same time, God is obliged to render it impossible that he should be exposed to the threatenings? Or to what purpose is it for God to give a law at all? For, according to this supposition, it is God, and not the creature, that is under the law. It is the lawgiver's care, and not the subject's, to see that his

law is obeyed ; and this care is what the law-giver is absolutely obliged to." This conclusion cannot be evaded. They, therefore, who complain because they are made capable of sinning, find fault with God, because they are made rational and moral beings. As you have been passing along through the country in one of the vernal months, when the face of nature just began to be renovated, has not your eye rested with pleasure, as it glanced over the landscape, upon the plough as it moved steadily onward, upturning the rich dark mould, along the whole length of the furrow? You then had before you a specimen of two kinds of government : the one physical, and the other moral. The ox is kept to the plough by physical force, by a yoke and chain. The ploughman is kept to his work by moral influences. The reward that he expects for his labor, leads him to follow that plough from early dawn till the shades of evening gather around him. Now who would prefer to be the ox, rather than the ploughman? And yet this is the subject of complaint with those who find fault with God because they are not made *incapable* of sinning. Oh, how absurd and wicked such complaints are ! Do not those who cherish such thoughts, who in their hearts blame God for the constitution of things under which they are placed, —do they not see that this very state of feeling which they cherish, has attached to it unmeasured guilt !

Beyond all dispute, the moral government under which we are living is the best, wisest, and most equitable scheme of government which we can conceive. No man can doubt or deny this, whose thoughts have ever penetrated beneath the surface of things.

2. *Secondly.* Let us now enter upon a more distinct consideration of *the law*, which God has appointed for the regulation of human conduct.

This law at first was written upon the heart of man in paradise, but being obliterated by the fall, it has since, in various ways, been republished to the world. The substance of it was embodied in the ten commandments, which God wrote with his own finger upon the tables of stone. It was published in a still more condensed form by the Saviour, when he declared that all the requisitions of the law and the prophets were suspended upon the two commands of supreme love to God, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves. The details of this law are spread out to view upon the pages of the divine Word. Let us see then what is the character of this law under which every human creature is placed.

1. In the *first place*, then, I remark, that it is good, just and holy. The law of God is a revelation of his mind and will, a simple transcript of his moral character. If a human government were to enact laws which in their operation were unjust and oppressive, what would this show? Would it not show that those who were at the head of that government, and from whom those laws emanated, were either wicked or ignorant? If a father should require his children to do that which would necessarily make them unhappy, would it not show that he was an unkind and cruel parent?

In like manner the divine law shows what the divine character is. If the least flaw can be found in any one of the statutes of Jehovah, it will prove that He is an imperfect Being! If his laws require men to do



that which would make them unhappy, unjust, or unholy, these laws would show that God was not a benevolent, just, and holy Being. But, in point of fact, the reverse of all this is found to be true. The divine law, in its operation, tends so directly, and so unerringly to goodness, rectitude and holiness, that it becomes a glorious mirror in which men and angels can behold the perfections of the holy and blessed God. Everything which the divine law enjoins, tends directly to the moral improvement and personal happiness of every rational being in the universe. If all the moral and intelligent beings that dwell on the face of this earth, were as intent upon keeping the law of God as the angels are in heaven, earth would immediately become as happy and as holy a place as heaven. There would be no difference. That which now constitutes the happiness of Heaven is, that all the beings there keep, wholly and entirely, God's pure and perfect law.

The law of God is equally good, just and holy in its prohibitions as in its requirements. Everything which it forbids is not only wrong, but in its very nature *ruinous*. Were you to strike out of the divine code a single prohibition, the law would cease to be good : for it would then permit something to be done, which in its tendency and results would produce misery and destruction. All the misery that is in the world, and all the misery that is in hell, came from violating the divine law, from doing what the law forbids to be done. If Jehovah had not required in his law precisely what he has : if that law did not contain precisely the prohibitions it does, it would have been imperfect ; and therefore furnished indubitable evidence

that it came from an imperfect being. The law of God then, is good, just and holy. It is precisely that which will bring the greatest glory to God, and impart the highest happiness to every intelligent creature.

If, then, that is good which tends directly to the honour of God, and the happiness of every created being, the law of God is good. And if that be evil which tends directly to dishonour God—to thwart his will, and to destroy the happiness of every intelligent being—then sin, or the violation of the law, is evil.

Bear this constantly in mind, that the law of God is good, just and holy—good, just and holy in its requirements—good, just and holy in its prohibitions—good, just and holy in its sanctions. And therefore bear in mind continually, that he who sins, or breaks that law, does all that he can to overturn the eternal principles of justice, to rob God of his glory, and to destroy the happiness of every being in the universe; for every being in the universe has only to follow the example of the sinner, and all these effects will ensue.

2. I remark, *Secondly*, that the divine law is *spiritual*. What I mean by spiritual is that it has reference not merely to the external conduct, but to the inward workings and affections of the mind. It reaches to every single mental act of every human creature. It lays its power upon the inner man, and requires unqualified and unbroken obedience in the heart.

Our Saviour has shown us what the true principle of interpretation as to the divine law is, in the comment which he made upon one or two of the prohibitions in the sacred decalogue. He pronounced an impure thought, adultery, and an angry and contemptu-

ous word, murder ! The law of God reaches to the thoughts of the heart. Its design is not simply to regulate the external conduct, but to restrain sin in its first risings in the soul. It takes cognizance of every thought and feeling and desire. It requires that an obedience shall be rendered to it, not only in the outward conduct, but in the purposes, the intents, and thoughts of the heart. It requires not only that the outward act should be good, but that it should proceed from a pure and holy motive. The only right motive from which any act can be done is the love of God. “*Love is the fulfilling of the law.*” The whole law is resolved into this. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.” All actions, however good in themselves, are sinful, if they do not proceed from love to God.

3. I remark, *Thirdly*, that the law is very strict and uncompromising in its demands. What it requires is to *be done*, and cannot be dispensed with. It makes no allowance for human infirmity, it offers no assistance to human frailty, it will not take the desire in the place of the act, it will not accept of a partial or imperfect obedience : *all* its requirements must *be kept*, and our conduct must come up to the full measure of those requirements.

If there was a human being before me that had never sinned till this evening : if, in all his life, he had never stepped aside in the least from the requirements of God’s holy law : if all his thoughts had been pure as angels’, if all his actions had been as holy as the conduct of the seraphim around the throne, and never in one single instance had he transgressed the divine

law till this evening—till since he came into this house ; if, while sitting here in silence, one wicked thought had risen up in his heart in rebellion against God—that one thought would bring down upon him the whole curse of the law ? “ Whosoever keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.”

The divine law requires “ a submission to God uninterrupted by a single insurgent feeling, a purity of character uncontaminated by a single spot, and a zeal of devotion unrelaxing in a single purpose.” Our love to God is to be entire and supreme. “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” We are to love God not simply as much as we do our property, our reputation, or our friends. We may love him more than these, and still not come up to the requirement. We must love him to the utmost extent of our faculties, even as the angels do who tread the celestial courts. All the powers of intellect, all the capabilities of moral feeling, all the ardor and intensity of awakened affections, must be fixed and concentrated upon God. The divine law requires every human creature to be from his birth, and to be for ever, what the angels are in heaven, in point of purity and holiness ; and it pours its everlasting maledictions on him that breaks its last command : “ Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

Now, unconverted friend, bearing in mind that the eye of God is on you, and beholding at one glance all your past history, bring up your conduct, and measure



it by this law, and see *then*, if you can plead NOT GUILTY to the indictment of Jehovah.

1. *First*, I would inquire, have all the requirements of this law been kept? Have there been no omissions of duty? Have you *loved* God to the full extent of the requirements of His law? Have you loved him with all your heart, and loved Him with this intensity of affection from the beginning of life, to the present moment? Have you worshipped and adored your Creator with the sinless and seraphic devotion which his law requires, have you done it from the first, and always? In these acts of homage and adoration, has there been a concentration of all the powers of thought, of feeling, and affection; no coldness, no wanderings, no worshipping with the lips, while the heart was far from God? Let conscience speak. What is the testimony of that witness for God within thee? If you have never uttered one profane, slanderous, or idle word, have you consecrated the noble faculty of speech to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow men? Have the praises of the Most High ever been on your tongue, have you declared his goodness, and done all that in you lay, to recommend the religion of the cross, and persuade all men to become holy? Let conscience speak—what is its testimony on this point? Do not forget that, “if your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things.” If you have not profaned the Sabbath by worldly business, by travelling, by visiting, by idle conversation, by vain and unprofitable thoughts, have *you kept it holy*? Has the whole day been filled up

“ With thoughts of God, and things divine ?”

Have those parts of your Sabbaths which were not occupied with the devotions of the sanctuary, been spent in prayer, in pious reading, and devout and holy meditation? And did you relish and take great delight in these holy exercises, regarding them as sweet foretastes of the heavenly rest? Let conscience speak—what is its testimony on this point? If a parent, have you set before your children a good and holy example? Have you daily gathered them around the family altar, and prayed with them, and for them? Have you taught them to fear, and love, and obey God? Have you told them in tones of melting kindness of the stupendous mercies of redemption, and of the boundless love of Christ? Have you ever given them so much religious instruction, that, if they had instruction from no other quarter, their feet would be guided to the paradise of God? Have you done your duty here? Let conscience speak—what is its testimony on this point?

If you have never spoken disrespectfully to your parents—never openly disobeyed them—never harbored a feeling that was wrong towards them, have you paid them all the honour which the divine law requires? Have you invariably manifested all that kindness and affection towards them which was their due, and sought, by every means in your power, to show some grateful returns for all their tender and unwearied solicitude for you? Are there no bitter recollections connected with your neglect of duty to them? Let conscience speak—what is its testimony upon this point?

If you have never wronged your neighbour in thought, word, or deed—if you have never defrauded

him—never calumniated him—never spoken evil of him—never cherished a feeling of hatred towards him, or wished him evil—never rejoiced when evil befel him, or grieved when prosperity attended him, have you always, and in all things, “done unto him as you would that he should do unto you?” Have you invariably sought to do good to all around you? Have you exerted yourself to the utmost extent of your ability to increase human happiness—to stay the waves of sin, and extend righteousness? Oh, conscience! thou witness for God, *now bear thy testimony*, as thou wilt in the tremendous day, when this sinner shall stand at the bar of Christ! Has he never neglected, never omitted a single duty? Has he from the very first, and always, come up fully to every requirement of the divine law? Conscience, what sayest thou? Tell me, unconverted friend, what is the response of that “*still small voice*” in thy bosom? I ask, would not your tongue falter, were you to presume, here in the presence of a heart-searching God, to claim for yourself sinless obedience to the divine law? Do you not know, in your own heart, that you have fallen short of that high and holy standard, times without number? “How, then, canst thou say, I am not polluted?”

2. Again: The law has prohibitions as well as precepts. Will your conduct, when tried by these, be approved before God? Are there no *sins of commission* set down against you in the book of everlasting remembrance? Have you never done anything which the law of God forbids? What does conscience say to this question? Cannot even your fellow-men bear

testimony against you on this point? Have you passed so *sinless* through the world that no tongue can tell of your open violations of the divine law? Can you stand up here to-night, and declare that your outward conduct has been such, that no human being can say that you have broken the law of God? Will not some of your fellow-men, in the day of judgment, rise up to bear witness against you? Have you never disobeyed your parents? Have you never been unkind to your friends? Have you never wronged any of your fellow-beings? Have you never swerved from the truth—never prevaricated—never slandered your neighbour? Have you never taken God's name in vain—never violated the Sabbath? Have you never been guilty of impure and unchaste conduct? Can you stand up here now, and challenge the whole world to produce evidence of any of these things against you? If not, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted?"

But even if, in the eye of the world, no stain rested upon your character, would you dare to make this appeal to the all-seeing God, in reference to your past conduct? Are there no scenes, in which you have been an actor, which you would not for worlds have exposed? Were an omniscient Being now standing in this congregation, and about to reveal all that you have ever done—about to lay open those secret and carefully concealed parts of your history, that you have not breathed to your nearest friends, could you hold up your head and listen to the recital? Would not your countenance be mantled with color deep as crimson dye?

My friend, *there is an omniscient eye* looking on



you! The great and dreadful God of heaven is here! See his law standing before you with all its high requirements, and hear him proclaiming to you, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me. *How canst thou say, I am not polluted?*"

Unconverted friend, let me be honest in this matter. Let us look at the truth as it is. If we were to proceed no farther—if God were to sit in judgment upon your soul merely in reference to your external conduct, would you dare to face him at his tribunal? Would you dare to stand up before him and say, "*I am not polluted?*" No, no. Conscience tells you that you would stand there trembling and condemned—that your sins would rise up around you in countless numbers, to testify to the justice of that sentence which would consign you to everlasting banishment from the presence of God. But the grand fountain of depravity is the heart. When this comes to be laid open, and all its secret workings exposed, there is not a man here—there is not a man in the universe that will presume to say, "*I am not polluted.*" And if polluted, my hearer, how can you be admitted into heaven—how can you come into the presence of God—how can you be happy in his presence, unless you are cleansed and made holy? If you are under the curse of God's violated law, how can you expect to escape the awful penalty, and go up and walk in the light of his countenance? Oh, you must see and feel your sinfulness, and go to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, or lie down for ever under the dreadful wrath of God!

I purpose next Sunday evening, to direct your attention to the evidences of human sinfulness, as evinced by the moral anatomy of the heart.

I must now draw these remarks to a close. Have I led any one to have a more just and adequate idea of their state and standing in the sight of God? There is no one thing that more strikingly proves the truth of God's word than the blindness of unconverted men. Though a flood of divine light is poured around their footsteps, they will not open their eyes to behold their guilt and danger. My only hope is that the Spirit of God will be poured out here so powerfully, that in spite of all their resistance, dying sinners may be forced to see the truth and call on God for mercy. Often have I seen those, who entertained the most self-complacent views of their own character, led to change their minds altogether in relation to themselves.

A striking instance of this now occurs to me: I was thrown into the society of an individual, who evidently possessed strong and masculine powers of intellect, and passed in the world for a person of great intelligence, and high moral worth. It was very obvious, however, after a very brief acquaintance, that this man was proud of his own moral excellences. He gloried in his own righteousness. Indeed, he distinctly said to me: "I love religion, because it sustains morality. I have ever sought to do my duty; and I have, thank God, a conscience void of offence. If I thought I could perform my duty any better by becoming a professor of religion, I should be very willing to become one." This was his view of the matter. It was abundantly evident that he had no

idea of his own sinfulness, or his need of a *Saviour*. But observe : this man attended upon a preached gospel. The Spirit of the living God was there present ; only a few weeks elapsed after this conversation before the truth broke in upon his mind. With all his supposed righteousness, he now saw himself a condemned sinner, in the hands of an angry God. So changed were his views in relation to himself—so utterly sinful did he now appear in his own eyes, that he could scarcely be persuaded that even the *infinite* mercy of God could reach his case—that there could be any salvation for one who was so vile and hell-deserving as he was.

How well it will be, dear friends, to make this discovery as to our real character before it is for ever too late to be benefited by the discovery ! This is not always the case. Some men die as stupid and as ignorant of their awful sinfulness in the sight of God, as they have lived. Oh, what a tremendous scene opens upon them in eternity ! Others continue to keep their eyes closed, till they lie stretched on a dying bed, and then the truth flashes in upon them in a moment.

A few years since, a case of this kind was related to me by a friend, under whose own eye it happened : One who had lived so as to gain the general esteem of his neighbours, and who had reached a good old age, was at length laid on the bed of death. The thought of going into the unveiled presence of God, to be tried for his soul, awoke him from his spiritual slumbers. He sent for his pastor, and upon his arrival, said to him : “ Why have you not plainly told me of my guilt, and laid before me my danger ? ” The pastor replied : “ I have repeatedly in the pulpit, yea, constantly pro-

claimed the guilt and danger of all unconverted men.” “*But,*” said this awakened and dying sinner, “I always thought that you were speaking to others. *Now* I feel that I am the man : and *now* it is too late ! Oh, what a load of guilt is now on my soul. Three score years and ten have I lived, and neglected God all the time ! I used to think I was ready and prepared to meet him : but I did not then see the exceeding wickedness of my heart, and now it is too late. Oh, if I could live only one week—only one week—how would I *work* to save my soul. But I cannot do it—I cannot do it—I am lost, for I feel that even now I am dying !” It was indeed so ! The ghastly hue of death sat upon his countenance, and though his pastor sought to direct him to Christ, no comfort dawned upon this aged sinner. In the midst of his distracting fears and bitter anguish, the string of life broke asunder, and his soul was hurried away to the judgment bar to hear the sentence that sealed its everlasting doom.

I will only add, will it not be better to see and feel our malady, while we still dwell in Immanuel’s land, and while a voice is still coming upon our ear saying, “there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there,” rather than wait and make the discovery just as the iron gates of despair are closing upon us for ever. One thing is certain, that he who does not see and deplore his guilt here, will see and deplore it through the wasteless ages of eternity.

My dying hearer, then come to the light. See that you are polluted. Neither deny, nor attempt to con-



ceal your exceeding sinfulness : but come to the fountain of Immanuel's blood, and wash and be clean. This you cannot do as long as you remain unconverted.

Do not forget that while you continue in this state, you are under wrath and condemnation.

## DISCOURSE VI.

### THE SINFULNESS OF AN UNCONVERTED STATE.

“How canst thou say I am not polluted?”—Jer. ii. 23.

IN the last Discourse we saw that the text called our attention to a great controversy pending between Jehovah and impenitent sinners. He had brought a charge of unmeasured depravity against them, to which they refused to plead *guilty*. To convict them out of their own mouths, he invited them to testify against him, to show, if they could, any defect in his government, any unkindness in his dealings, any injustice in his laws. The result of an examination of the government under which they were living, and of the laws appointed to regulate their conduct was, and in every case will be, to fasten upon the mind a conviction of the benevolence of that government, of the rectitude of those laws, and of the goodness, and wisdom, and holiness of the divine Being from whom they proceeded.

But these laws have been broken, and the authority of this divine Being contemptuously trodden under foot by every sinner, and they who refuse to turn from their sins, still continue to trample on God's law,

and to set his authority at defiance ; and hence, He appeals to them in the language of the text—“ *How canst thou say I am not polluted ?*” We attempted to show last Sunday evening the awful guilt, and exceeding sinfulness of every one who continued in an unconverted state. And we do think it was made evident, that a comparison of our conduct with the high and holy law of God, entirely sustained the charge preferred against us, and clearly showed that “every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” We were then principally occupied in contemplating overt acts of sin, either of omission or commission. But these by no means constitute the largest class of offences against God. The heart is the grand fountain from which all this evil flows. *There, within, concealed from every eye,* but the all-seeing eye of God, are sin and depravity enough to desolate the universe. Oh, what chambers of imagery are there ! That fearful sight which the Prophet saw in the sanctuary, when he beheld every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, portrayed upon the wall round about, gives to us an exact idea of the unregenerate human heart. If the tongue, unrestrained by divine grace, is “*a world of iniquity,*” what must the unsanctified heart be, from whence *it* draws all its evil, its fuel and its fires ? Is it not, in the language of St. James, that “*hell*” which sets the tongue on fire ? Well may it be said that, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately wicked.*” This is God’s own testimony—“*the heart is desperately wicked.*”

The Lord does not say this of the profligate and abandoned alone, but of every human creature. And

I desire to have it distinctly understood, that the argument we are conducting to prove the awful guilt and exceeding sinfulness of every one who lives in an unconverted state, applies not simply to the immoral and openly vicious, but to the most amiable and lovely character on this globe, if the heart of that individual has not been renewed by divine grace.

I stand on the high vantage ground of divine truth, when I affirm of such an one, that with all those adornments of external virtue—with all that kindness and gentleness and sweetness of temper, “*the carnal mind is there, which is enmity against God.*” Yea, that *that* heart, in the eye of infinite purity, is “*desperately wicked.*” Let us look at this subject for a moment. That the heart is desperately wicked can be shown from *the state of its affections*, and from *the stream of iniquity* that is continually flowing from it.

1. *The state of its affections.* The Scriptures assure us, “that the *heart* of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” The affections are withdrawn from God, and fixed in love and strong attachment upon what he abhors. The habitual desires of the heart are after those things which are exceedingly offensive to God. All the *acts* of sin which unconverted men commit are not half so offensive to God, as the *state of their affections*. They cherish in their bosoms a fixed dislike and opposition to the requirements of God’s law. They will not bow to His authority, but are fully resolved to go on and rebel more and more. “The carnal, or unrenewed mind, is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.” It is *the state of the sinner’s heart*, which marks him as infinitely *polluted* in the eye of God. His sins merely



show what the state of his heart is. I will endeavour to illustrate this idea.

You have a clerk, with whom you entrust your business, and who, unbeknown to you, purloins a small sum each week from moneys that come into his hands. You have a large business and can spare it perfectly well, and, but for an accidental detection, would never have known it. But after this detection, would you be willing to go on, and leave your business in his hands? No: you might not care so much for the amount of which you have been robbed, but this act of petty pilfering has revealed to you the character of this man. It has shown you that he is destitute of honesty—that he only wants the opportunity, and the prospect of concealment, and there is no sum so large that he would not lay his grasp upon it. This act has let you into the state of his heart, and convinced you that he is a corrupt and unprincipled man. In like manner the least sin committed against God knowingly and intentionally, shows the state of the sinner's heart. A man may regard the violation of the Sabbath, or the neglect of prayer, as a trifling matter; but this infraction of the divine law shows what the state of that man's heart is. It shows that he has no respect for the authority of God, and that there is no sin that he would not commit if the temptation were sufficiently great.

If you had a son whom you had nurtured and brought up, and that son had no affection for you, but felt so embittered against you that he had mingled poison with your food, how would you feel if you lay dying under the influence of this poison? With what an eye would you look upon this child, as he stood by

your bed? Oh, if he were penitent, if the tear trickled down his cheek, and you saw the evidences of returning affection gushing forth, you could forgive him all. But if he stood there unmoved, cherishing the same parricidal feelings—ready, should medical skill arrest the fatal poison, to plot your death in some other way, would not the *state of his heart, his present feelings*, more affect you than all he had done? In the same manner, the state of the sinner's feelings and heart presents a most affecting view of his exceeding sinfulness. After all his sins, he continues unchanged. He is not sorry that he has offended God, but he is ready to go on and sin more and more. Does not this clearly show that his *heart is desperately wicked*?

2. Again. This is also proved by the stream of iniquity that is continually flowing from the sinner's heart. We have seen what this stream is, when it reaches that point where it spreads out into visible and overt acts. But here it puts on a thousand false semblances, and often appears what it is not. We must go nearer to the fountain to know what the stream is. We must lay open the human heart, and see its moral anatomy; we must penetrate into its chambers of secret thought, observe its hidden workings, and all its varied moral movements, before we can see the full, emphatic meaning of that divine asseveration, which declares that it is *desperately wicked*. Let the divine law be applied to the thoughts, purposes, and desires of the heart, and the result will show whether that heart is desperately wicked—whether unconverted men are polluted or not. Will you allow me, then, to hold up this perfect rule, and

apply it to each one of you? And may the Holy Spirit, as I proceed, shed illumination into the dark chambers of every unregenerate heart!!

As to open violations of the law, you may be comparatively blameless; but how is it with your *thoughts* and *desires*? Let us recur to the first and highest requirement in the statute book of Jehovah, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” Have you ever thus loved God? Have you not valued the merest trifles more than Jehovah? Have you not thought more of fashion, and dress, and money, than of the favour of God? Have you not loved Him less than your friends—less than your property—less than your worldly pleasures? Then every day, every hour, and every moment since you became a moral agent, you have broken the first and highest law of God! What a stream of iniquity has been flowing from this point! Consider your very best actions. You have sometimes attempted to pray. Am I mistaken? If I am, there is no need of my attempting to prove that you have a *desperately wicked heart*. If when your best friend—your constant benefactor—the Being from whom you have received all your mercies, daily condescends to hold intercourse with you, invites you to come into his presence, and by his high and holy authority, says, “thou shalt worship the Lord thy God”—you have never yet worshipped him—never spoken to him—never held converse with him; what further evidence is necessary to show that your heart is utterly turned away from God and goodness? If you have ever attempted to pray, how did you perform this duty? Were all your thoughts on God? Did the glory of His perfections fill and fire

your soul? Did your heart burn with divine love, and all the powers of your mind become absorbed in the contemplation of the divine excellence? Were the glowing sentiments of your heart, then, "*Whom have I in heaven but thee—and there is none upon earth that I desire, in comparison with thee?*" Were these your feelings? Or was not your heart cold, and your thoughts wandering to the ends of the earth? When in the very *act* and *attitude* of prayer, have you not been thinking about your business—about making money—about political movements—about literary pursuits—about pleasure—about anything but God? If, then, in the very best action which you ever undertook to perform, you have done it with such feelings of heart as to insult the high majesty of heaven, must you not have a wicked heart, and *how can you say I am not polluted?*

Unconverted friend, stand up before the pure and holy law of God, and look at yourself in this divine mirror, and you will soon exclaim with the prophet, in reference to yourself, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores."

Is it not a fact that you have spent the greater part of life without considering what you did, or caring whether you did it well, or ill? Oh, what a stream of sin, in the form of purposes and desires, has rolled from your heart! In looking back you can now see that many of those desires were wrong. But how many there are that pass you, like the motes that play upon the sun-beam, and elude all your endeavours to examine or pursue them! There are ten thousand



times ten thousand evil purposes which have once been in your mind, that you have now entirely forgotten. How often has pride risen up there ! What vain and foolish desires have been cherished ! What feelings of hatred, of malevolence, of envy, of lust, have been there ! What unchaste, impure, and unholy thoughts ! Oh, you would not disclose for worlds, to your best friend, what has passed through your mind ! And yet, God has seen it all, and knows it all ! Yes, all those secret sins of the heart are written down in the book of His remembrance—a book, which will one day be opened, and out of which you will be judged !

Unconverted hearer, now look at yourself, and see how you appear in the eye of God ! Are you disposed to gather around you the good deeds which you have done, to set off against these ? Why, though you had performed ten thousand deeds of angelic purity, they could not silence the voice of these sins, that are crying to heaven for vengeance ! But where are your good deeds ? Write them all down before you—look at them. The great question is, will God approve of them ? The motive from which they were done must determine that. He looks upon the heart, not upon the outward appearance. From the list of your good deeds, therefore, you will have to remove all that were done simply to please yourself or others ; all that were done from a regard to the opinion of the world, or from motives of self-aggrandizement ; all that were done to raise yourself, or to gain applause ; all that were done from the fear of punishment, or to purchase future happiness. Having removed these, how many do you think would remain ? In this whole list, how

many would be found upon which there was no blemish, nor stain—which proceeded purely from love to God, and were entirely holy and sinless? How many such would be found? Not one—not one! There is not a single act in your life, when measured by the high and holy law of God, that would not be found sinful. You have never done one single thing in all your life, that comes up fully to the requirements of the divine law. Every desire of your heart, every purpose of your mind, every affection of your soul, however good it was, when weighed in the scales of infinite rectitude, will be found wanting. You have, therefore, done nothing but sin all your life. And how, then, I ask, in the name of all that is high and holy, can you say, “*I am not polluted!*”

I wish to be understood as making this appeal to every unconverted person in this assembly. There may be here, this evening, some who have been grossly immoral; there may be here, some who are profane swearers, sabbath-breakers, gamblers, drunkards, whore-mongers, and adulterers. God knows who they are, and he has sworn that such shall not enter the kingdom of heaven! If they do not repent, and flee from the wrath which their vile abominations have stirred up, as the Lord liveth, they will quickly be in the bottomless pit!

But I am not now speaking particularly to such. God bids me lay the charge of infinite guilt at the door of every unconverted person in this audience.

My unconverted hearer may be a literary man, devoted to one of the learned professions; he may have cultivated his intellectual faculties and elevated them to a high point of improvement, for the good of his

race. His mind may have no sympathy with the empty vanities and idle frivolities with which he is surrounded. His affections may have no tendency to descend, and fasten upon the low and grovelling pleasures of sense. He may breathe in the pure atmosphere of intellectual existence, and find employment for all his elevated powers in exploring the fields of useful knowledge. And yet, if his heart has not been changed—if he has not been created anew in Christ Jesus, when he comes to stand by the side of God's holy law, it will be seen that he is a rebel against heaven—*polluted*, and covered over with crimson guilt.

My unconverted hearer may be a most estimable citizen. He may be the kind husband, affectionate father. Uprightness and honesty may characterize his dealings; he may be forward in the promotion of every scheme which has for its object the moral and religious improvement of his species. His whole external conduct may wear the aspect of spotless virtue. Yet if his heart has not been changed and purified, and brought into entire submission to Jehovah—if a new principle of divine life has not been lodged there by the power of the Holy Ghost, when tried by God's high and holy law, there will be found a load of guilt upon his soul which will sink him down to the depths of perdition!

My unconverted hearer may be a lovely female—the charm and ornament of every circle in which she moves. Maternal solicitude may have eagerly sought to instil into her heart every principle of virtue, and to spread over her character every winning grace. All that is sweet and amiable in temper, kind and

condescending in manners, gentle and attractive in virtue, may have been most assiduously wrought into her character, and thrown over her whole demeanor. And yet, if there has not been a radical change in her heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, if she has not repented truly of her sins, if she has not been converted and made a child of God by spiritual regeneration ; if she does not now stand sheltered beneath the wings of covenanted mercy, if her soul has not been sprinkled with the atoning blood of Jesus, with all the graces and virtues that adorn her character, there will be found beneath this external covering such stains of guilt, such rebellion against God, such opposition to his law, as will draw down upon her its everlasting curse !

Unconverted hearer, whoever thou art, a mountain of guilt is on thy soul ! Look at the pure and perfect, the high and holy law of God, and see if it be not so. Oh, that you felt the weight of the load you carry ! You will feel it one day ! *It may* press you down amid consuming fires *for ever*.

God in this, his great controversy, has been pleading with you to-night. He has shown you, that your heart was *desperately wicked*, and your whole soul *polluted* in his sight. What reply have you to make ? What reason have you to assign why the law should not take its course ? What can you do ? You are condemned, altogether condemned. You have no Christ—no refuge to which you can flee. You must go to the judgment bar, and be tried by that law which proclaims, “ *The soul that sinneth it shall die.* ”

Jehovah from highest heaven, looking down upon earth, declares, “ There is none that doeth good, no



not one." The law responds, "Cursed be every one that sinneth against God." "Let wrath come upon them, and let them go down quick into hell, for I have seen iniquity in them all." Your conscience instantly replies, "I am one of that wretched number polluted in the eye of heaven, and doomed to darkness and death."

My dear hearer, I would not have you think, for a moment, that in all this attempt to convince you of your sinfulness and moral pollution, I have forgotten that the same arguments that prove your guilt, are equally valid against myself. No: nor have I forgotten that I was once as blind to my guilt as you are! I can never be thankful enough to God that my eyes were opened to see the pollution of my unregenerate soul. If saved from that pollution, it is only through grace. I feel that there is nothing between me and an eternal hell, but the blood of the Lamb. I expect to enter heaven in no other character than as a pardoned criminal. I would say to all you whom I have been trying to convince of your sinfulness,—I stand on the same ground with you. I have heard, yea, I know, that there is "Balm in Gilead, and a physician there." I would fain lead you to that Great Physician, whose healing power I have felt. I would persuade you to wash in the fountain of Immanuel's blood and be clean, that you may go along with me to the celestial city, and be for ever happy with God. This is the sole reason why I have spoken to you so plainly to-night. I know that you will never go to that great physician, that you will never seek to be cleansed in the fountain of a Saviour's blood, till you see and feel

your guilt. Let the law then be applied to your conduct, and the workings of your heart bring to you a knowledge of your exceeding sinfulness. Let me, before I bring this discourse to a conclusion, direct your attention to some of the aggravations, under which your sins have been committed.

(1.) The first consideration I would suggest, is derived from *the character of sin*. Sin is the transgression of the law. The law, as we have already seen, is a transcript of the divine mind—a disclosure of the divine will in reference to us. Obedience to the law, therefore, is a compliance with the express wishes of God. Whatever the divine Being wills, must necessarily tend to his own glory, and the happiness of all created intelligences. To sin, to violate the law of God, therefore, is to act in opposition to His will; and, consequently, is nothing short of a direct effort to rob Jehovah of his glory, and to destroy the happiness of the whole intelligent creation.

How peculiarly aggravated, then, must your conduct appear in the eye of God, when you consider that you have done nothing all your life long but sin; and that in thus sinning you have done all that you could to subvert the throne of God—to strip him of his eternal glory, and to pour misery and desolation over the universe; and that if all intelligent beings had done as you have done, heaven would have been desolated, God would have had no worshippers; instead of the harps of glory, the wailings of wo would have been heard around the throne, and the whole universe would have been converted into one boundless Hell!

(2.) Another aggravation connected with your career of sin, is, that all the violations of the divine

law, of which you have been guilty, *were voluntary acts*. You have cast the precepts of the Most High behind you, and trampled upon his holy law knowingly and intentionally. You chose to break the law of God. You did it *voluntarily*. You have from preference walked in the way of transgression. There is not a sin which memory now calls up before you, that you might not have avoided. If you could not have avoided it, you would now feel no compunction—no remorse. You deliberately chose the path of transgression. Notwithstanding the everlasting God had laid down his commands, and threatened to pour upon you the thunder of his terrible wrath if you disobeyed, you paid no attention to his command or threat, but, in direct defiance of Him, put your hand to the accursed thing—not *once*, or *twice*, but a *thousand times, every hour*. You still continue to do it. You sit here before God to-night in the midst of your sins, *a voluntary transgressor* ! “How *then* canst thou say I am not polluted ?”

(3.) Another aggravation under which your sins have been committed, is that you have broken God’s law in the midst of light and knowledge. You have had abundant knowledge to direct you. You “were born in Immanuel’s land ; and God hath written to you the great things of his law. You have known to do good, and have not done it.” Your cradle song was one of Zion’s hymns. The mother that bore and nursed you, told you when you sat upon her knee, of Jesus and eternal life. From your earliest infancy you have enjoyed the most abundant opportunities, both in public and private, of instruction in divine things. With you, it has been line upon line,

and precept upon precept. The word of God has been in your hands, and the voice of parents and pastors continually in your ear. The exhibitions of divine truth, which every returning Sabbath has brought to your notice, have been like a voice continually behind you, saying, "*this is the way, walk ye in it.*" There has been pointed out to you ten thousand times, the narrow path that leadeth unto life, but you have not walked therein.

(4.) Another aggravation is, that you have continued to sin, under solemn vows and promises of amendment. Most probably you have several times been awakened, and resolved to turn to God. But when you again stepped into the world, its allurements again came before you, and you turned back to pursue your old courses. Or, perhaps, you were laid upon a bed of sickness and brought to the border of the grave. As you lay there, weak, languid and almost lifeless, you looked up to the Lord and solemnly promised Him, that if He would raise you up, and restore you to health, you would immediately enter upon his service. But as soon as the glow of health again sat upon your cheek, and you were again able to mingle in the scenes and engagements of life, you returned to your sins—your vows were forgotten; yea, God and all his mercy were forgotten and despised.

(5.) Another aggravation to be noticed is, that you have sinned against the remonstrances of conscience, and the strivings of God's Holy Spirit. Consult the records of conscience, and see if it be not so. Ah! when your lips have been justifying yourself—when you have been speaking lightly of some solemn sermon that you have heard—when you have been try-



ing to impress those around you with the idea that you were entirely unconcerned, and you would go on and sin, has there not been a voice, a witness within, that told you, you were wrong—that you were provoking God—that you were offending the Everlasting One ?

These remonstrances of conscience, when enforced by the strivings of the Holy Spirit, are often very loud and imperative. Oftentimes under their influence, impenitent men cannot stay away from the sanctuary, although, every time they visit it, they depart from hearing the word in a rage, because conscience, summoned to its office, arrays before them, while listening to that word, their sins in all their length and breadth. They are truly unhappy. Though conscience remonstrates, and the Spirit of God bids them stop, they will go on and sin. The goadings of conscience and the rebukes of the Spirit often follow men into the gayest scenes in which the thoughtless mingle. The Rev. Mr. Doddridge declares, that he was “assured by a gentleman of undoubted credit, that when he was in pursuit of all the gayest sensualities of life, and was reckoned one of the happiest of mankind, when he has seen a dog come into the room where he was among his merry companions, he has groaned inwardly, and said, ‘*Oh, that I had been that dog !*’ ”

Thus we see that the Spirit of God will not let the sinner alone. Conscience will not let him alone, till it is seared with a red-hot iron. This has added immeasurably to your guilt, that your sins have been committed while conscience has remonstrated, and the Spirit of God warned and striven with you.

(6.) And finally, I remark, as the last and highest aggravation, your sins have been committed in view of the greatest love and mercy that were ever exhibited to created beings. Oh, unconverted hearer, have you not been nourished and brought up by the everlasting God as His child? and yet you have rebelled against Him! Did He not give you being? did he not watch over your infant days, and protect you ten thousand times, when all your parents' care would have been unavailing? Has he not given you rational powers? Has he not supplied your wants every day with unwearied liberality? Has He not heard your cry when trouble came upon you? Has He not often rescued you from ruin, when it seemed just ready to swallow you up? Has He not raised you oftentimes from a sick bed? Look around upon all your possessions, and say what one thing have you in the world which his goodness did not give you?

Added to all the other gifts which the Most High has bestowed upon you, is the gift of his Son. The Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the accursed tree for you. For you he groaned, and bled, and died. You have been offered a free, and full, and everlasting pardon. The gates of heaven have been opened, and you have been invited and entreated to enter. In view of all this mercy, and kindness, and love, and goodness, you have gone on and added sin to sin. You have persisted in a course of impenitence, in view of Christ dying for you on the cross; and while ten thousand voices were sounding in your ear, urging you to return and live. You have contemned all these, rejected all the proffers of salvation, trodden under foot the blood of the Son of God, and done de-

spite to the Spirit of Grace. “*How, then, canst thou say, I am not polluted?*”

Now I entreat you, look calmly at this whole subject. You see that the law of God is good, that it is the rule of infinite rectitude, that your actions, and words, and thoughts, are to be measured by it. Bring up your conduct to this holy standard. Let all that you have ever done be tried by it. Do you see no transgressions? or rather, do you not see more in number than the sands on the sea shore? Apply the divine law to the secret workings of your mind. Do you see no sins that have been shut up in your heart, and are known only to God and yourself? or rather, do you not see there more in number than all the multitudinous waves of the ocean? These have all been committed against Almighty God, and are regarded by Him as so many distinct acts of rebellion. Now, unconverted hearer, with these facts before you, will you presume to talk of your innocence? With these facts before you, do you question whether it would be right for God to cast you into bottomless perdition? whether, after all, you must be converted, in order to be saved? When you have never once loved God as you ought, never once worshipped Him as He requires, never once truly adored the infinite King of heaven and earth; when you have slighted all your life long the mercy of God, and valued it no more than the dirt under your feet, but have taken encouragement from the thought of God's mercy, to go on and sin more and more; when you have done nothing but sin all your days, and your heart full of opposition to Jehovah has arisen a thousand times in rebellion against Him, and never once cor-ally sub-

mitted to Him ; yes, when you, a poor worm, a potsherd, a broken piece of an earthen vessel, have dared to find fault with God, and question his justice—can you talk of your innocence ? After all this, can you talk of its being hard, if God should cast you off for ever ? Do you not see that you lie wholly at His mercy ? that He might let you go down to the pit and all heaven would say, *it was just ?*

My dear friend, look at your sins, and at all the aggravations that attend them ! Look at your wicked heart—how full of vile and abominable passions, and so *hard* that it cannot be touched or moved by all the love and sufferings of Christ ! Sinner ! oh, sinner ! “ *how canst thou say, I am not polluted ?* ” Dost thou feel no conviction fastening on thy soul ? Thou hast violated God’s known law—thou hast despised and abused His numberless mercies—thou hast refused to listen to conscience—thou hast resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit, and art still cherishing opposition to the everlasting Jehovah, and does no conviction of sin cleave to thy soul ? Dost thou not yet see that thou art polluted ? Be assured of this, *God will convict you.*

“ Ghostly death will quickly come,  
And drag you to his bar,  
There to hear your awful doom,  
Will fill you with despair !  
All your sins will round you crowd,  
You shall mark their crimson dye ;  
Each for vengeance crying loud,  
And what can you reply ?  
Though your heart were made of steel,  
Your forehead lined with brass,  
God, at length, will make you feel :  
He will not let you pass.”



Unconverted hearer, I have no doubt there are thousands now in perdition, whose guilt never equalled thine; and it is the greatest of all wonders that thou art here this evening listening to the voice of mercy, and that God is still on the throne of mercy, waiting to be gracious to thee. Consider, I entreat you, whether you are willing to live any longer in your present state, or rather, shall I not say, consider whether you are willing to die in your present state? Oh, may the dreadful God of heaven keep you out of perdition till you have heard the truth a little longer! Do not forget, however, that you lie entirely at His mercy. If you die as you now are, heaven must change its inhabitants, or you can never be admitted there.

## DISCOURSE VII.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE UNCONVERTED SINNER'S DEATH,  
AND THE ENTIRE JUSTICE OF SUCH A DOOM.

“The wages of sin is death.”—Rom. vi. 23.

THERE are three things which all unconverted men are disposed to call in question. The *first* is, *their exceeding sinfulness*. They are willing to admit that they fall short of their duty in some things, but they cannot see how they are *great sinners*.

In the two preceding discourses, it has been attempted to prove this fact—to show that every unconverted man in the world is awfully guilty before God, polluted in every part, and lying under the just displeasure of Heaven. In illustrating this point, we charged no more sin upon unconverted men, than the Bible lays at their door; no more than they will find pressing upon their souls, when summoned to stand at the bar of Christ.

The *second thing* to which we adverted, and which unconverted men are disposed to call in question, is, *the certainty that sin will be punished with everlasting death*. This is one of the positions that we shall attempt to establish this evening: “*The wages of sin is death.*”

The *third* thing referred to, which unconverted men are disposed to call in question, is, *the justice of God* in punishing the transgressors of His laws with *endless death*.

When the claims of the divine law are pressed upon impenitent men; when that law is held up as a mirror before them, in which they are forced to see their guilt, and by a view of their transgressions they are reminded of the awful penalties annexed to the violated law: when they see that *eternal death* is the certain portion of the sinner, they immediately begin to try to excuse themselves. They try to cast the blame of their conduct upon another; and, if they cannot succeed in this, instead of humbling themselves at the feet of Jehovah, they do not hesitate to accuse him of injustice in making such strict laws, and in threatening to execute them with such severity. Hence another position that we shall attempt to illustrate, this evening, will be, the entire justice of God in condemning the unconverted and finally impenitent sinner to the certain and never ending torments of perdition. These are awful themes on which to speak, but they are topics that must be investigated—truths that must be looked at, if the sinner is driven from every false refuge, to Christ. May the Spirit of the living God, while we speak, shed his illumination over our minds, and enable us to view these things as we shall when the light of eternity has fully revealed them!

The whole truth to be illustrated can be stated in a very few words. God will punish sin with everlasting death, and he will *justly* do so. The *certainty* and *justice* of the endless punishment of unconverted

sinner are the points upon which we are to speak. "The wages of sin is death."

Before I proceed to this illustration, may I be permitted to appeal to every unconverted man in this house, and ask him if, in sober and honest truth, he is not convinced in his own mind, *that he is a sinner in the sight of a holy God*. Can you, my dear friend, stand up in the presence of the searcher of hearts, and say—"I am not polluted—I have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." Ah, look again. In view of the high, and strict, and unbending requirements of God's holy law, compared with your past conduct, and the present state of your heart, do you see no leprous spots of sin on your soul? Rather do you not see, that "from the sole of your foot even unto the head there is no soundness in you, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." Do you see, when you come to look down into the depths of your heart, and ascertain the motives that have animated and governed you, that your whole life has been but one continued course of rebellion against Jehovah; that nothing has been right in its principle and end, that your entire nature is disordered, that all your thoughts, and desires, and affections, and pursuits, have been alienated from God.

Just for one moment look at the law of God: see what it requires, and consider how you have acted. It requires you to love the Author of your being supremely, with sinless and seraphic affection! Have you ever loved him so? Have you not acted as though you did not love him at all; as though you hated him, and were determined to tempt him to the uttermost, and to weary out his patience? Consider



your actions : have not many of them—have not all of them been stained with sin ? Consider your words : have not many things gone out of your lips, that were offensive to God—do you remember that God will bring every idle, as well as every untrue, unkind, unchaste and profane word into judgment ? Consider the state of your heart and affections. Do you remember that that world *within* is to be laid open, and that God's most righteous law is to be applied to every secret desire, and thought, and purpose of your heart ? Oh, that wicked heart, what streams of iniquity have flowed from it, and what an inexhausted fountain there is still *there* of iniquity and opposition to God ! In view of all these facts, do you still hesitate to concede that you are a sinner ? Have you never broken Jehovah's law ? When you loved God the most, if you have even loved him at all, did your love rise to the full measure which the divine precept demands, with all the heart and soul and strength—*supremely* ? If not, your best moment was a moment of guilt ; you have never come up to the requirements of the divine law in a single act ; you have done nothing but break the law all your days ; you are then, indeed, a sinner in the sight of God. You cannot disclaim this character. You are infinitely interested, then, in the subject that is to be discussed this evening—the consequence of sin, which our text declares to be death. “ *The wages of sin is death.* ”

The transgressor of God's law will be punished with everlasting death. *This he deserves.* Perhaps you are not convinced of this. Perhaps, though you cannot but admit that you are a sinner in the sight of God, you do not feel that you are very greatly to

blame. Perhaps you are disposed to offer many excuses, and are ready to attempt to palliate your conduct, and to regard your violations of the divine law, and your exposure to its awful penalty, rather as your misfortune than as your crime. It will be our object to disabuse you of this error, and to show that God's justice will be entirely vindicated, in pouring out upon you "wrath unto the uttermost." "*The wages of sin is death.*"

1. The certainty of the endless punishment of the unconverted, and finally impenitent. There is in the bosom of every human creature a consciousness, and deep-rooted conviction, that he is an accountable being, and that he cannot sin without incurring the awful displeasure of Almighty God : and that displeasure once incurred, no man can tell how it is ever to be turned away. Whatever men may say, they cannot rid themselves of the belief, *that there is a God above, that he is looking down upon all their conduct, and that he will one day call them to an account for the deeds done in the body.*

Among the most evident and easily demonstrable propositions that can be presented to the human mind, are the following—that this world had a Creator—that that Creator still lives, and will live for ever—that he governs the world and beings whom he created—that we, therefore, are living under his government—that this government is a moral government, since we are creatures possessing a rational and moral nature, and he governs things according to their nature. Every government, however, must have laws to regulate the conduct of those who are subject to its control. The

divine government has laws. Those laws can never be set aside, for they are founded in the nature of God. They are unalterable as the character of Jehovah himself. They are holy and just and good, and can never abate any of their requirements.

Now the certainty of the endless punishment of the sinner, who is not converted, and saved by grace, results from the immutable character of God's government and the unalterable nature of his laws.

1. The first remark that I would offer by way of illustrating this point, is, that the divine law is invariably enforced by the sanction of penalties. "*The wages of sin is death.*"

The very idea of a law without a penalty is in itself absurd. No legislative enactments would be of any avail, were there not some provision made for enforcing them. Should a law be passed forbidding any crime, whether it were gambling, theft, highway robbery, or murder, it would not restrain from the commission of that crime in any degree, unless the law had some penal sanction. For the legislature to say, "*Thou shalt not kill,*" and there leave the matter, would not restrain the murderer from his bloody purpose. There must be held up to his view some terrible punishment, as the necessary consequent of the breach of that law, before the law would have any force. Hence, human legislatures never enact a law which is not enforced by a penalty. And can we suppose that God is less wise than man? Will he take less care to have his laws obeyed than human legislatures. Open the statute book of the Almighty, and you will see that the divine law is everywhere enforced by high and awful sanctions. That law

cannot be broken with impunity. Of this, all who have any correct knowledge of the divine law, seem fully conscious. There is no man that in his heart thinks it safe to trample on the law of God. Every one who breaks that law, knows that he is condemned, and that he has drawn upon him the dreadful displeasure of the omnipotent One. The violated law speaks forth its thunders to the conscience, and conscience gives back the echo through all the recesses of the soul, with deep and startling tone. Every unconverted man, whose conscience is not seared as with a hot iron, knows, that God's law has a penalty annexed to it, and that he stands exposed to that penalty every moment.

2. I remark, *Secondly*, that the penalty annexed to the divine law, as a sanction to enforce its obedience, is most *awful and terrific*. This point will be made out by a very few references to Scripture.

The first text which I will adduce is this: "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" This death, whatever it be, is spoken of as the penalty of the law, or the consequence of violating the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.

"*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" What is this death? It is not *natural*, or *physical death*. None are exempt from this. It is appointed unto all men once to die. They who embrace by faith, Christ as their Saviour, and are thus shielded from the penalty of the violated law, are nevertheless still subject to mortality, and are as sure of going down to the grave, as the most obdurate and rebellious sinner. This passage, therefore, does not refer to the death of the body—neither does it refer to *spiritual death*. It is spoken



of as a penalty, and therefore is precisely the same kind of death, of which the text speaks—"The wages of sin is death." Wages are something which are due after the work is done. Hence the recompense to the wicked is everywhere in the word of God represented as something which is rendered after death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after this* the judgment." "Fear him, which *after* he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity and dieth in them, for the iniquity he hath done shall he die." Hence it is expressly said, that the punishment for sin is DEATH, and yet that this is to take place *after* natural death, or the death of the body. Having continued to transgress, and at last died without repentance—then, as the penalty due to his sins, HE IS TO DIE. Though the sinner is condemned already, the sentence does not take effect till he steps into the invisible world. Hence, while he goes on sinning, the burden of wrath, which will one day press him down, is constantly accumulating. "He is treasuring up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." And because the full wages of sin are not received until the soul is summoned into the presence of God, the infliction of the penalty of the divine law is called "*the second death.*"

This arrangement brings us to the conclusion that the death spoken of in the passage adduced, and in the text, is not spiritual death. For spiritual death is something which follows immediately the commission of sin. It is the state in which all human creatures

are found—a state of sinfulness. The text would be shorn of all force and meaning by such an exposition. “*The wages of sin is a STATE OF SINFULNESS.*” This would be mere unmeaning verbiage. The text undertakes to describe the *final*, not the immediate consequence of breaking the law of God. The Apostle, having adverted to a sinful life, inquires what was its fruit, and then immediately thus responds to his own question: “The *end* of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the *end* everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The argument of the Apostle and the whole context, therefore, show that the death here spoken of is not *the death of the body, nor spiritual death*, but the infliction of the Divine penalty—a death which involves the happiness and powers of the soul. As natural death pierces the body with anguish, and inflicts pangs of unutterable distress, the Scriptures employ this image to convey to us an idea of the awful misery that will ultimately be felt by the unpardoned and unsaved violator of God’s law. His agonized soul will feel, through all its faculties, anguish and pains indescribable, and dreadful as these dying agonies.

The Scriptures employ the metaphor of fire to convey the same idea. As the body, when stretched upon burning coals, feels the most tremendous and excruciating pains, so will pains far more dreadful than these seize upon the soul when it begins to feel poured out upon it the penalty of God’s broken law. The sentence is, “Depart from me into everlasting *Fire.*”

Again : This penalty is described in the sacred Scriptures as *the curse* and *wrath* of God. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” “The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” “He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Oh, who can live under the curse and wrath of an infinite God ? Is not the penalty annexed to the divine law, as a sanction to enforce its obedience, most *awful and terrific* ? This penalty comprises all that is fearful in death, dreadful in the curse and wrath of God, terrible in tribulation and anguish, or tremendous in the darkness and despair and deep damnation of Hell ! This penalty, and all it comprises, hangs over every unconverted hearer in this house, and there is nothing that for a single moment prevents its falling, with its blighting, desolating weight, but the hand of God’s mercy. It must soon fall, and then the sinner is lost for ever.

3. This leads me to remark, *Thirdly*, that the penalty annexed to the divine law, as a sanction to enforce its obedience, is, “*Eternal death !*”

It has been previously remarked, that this penalty is not inflicted upon the soul till the body has sunk beneath the withering stroke of mortality. *The wages of sin is death.* This death is *eternal*. The fires into which the lost soul plunges, will burn on for ever. The punishment into which the wicked shall go away is *everlasting punishment*.

The following testimony of Scripture places this awful fact beyond a doubt : “The wicked shall be turned into hell,” “Into the fire that never shall be

quenched—where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” At the end of the world, Christ having separated the wicked from the righteous, will say to them, “Depart, ye cursed, *into everlasting fire.*” The finally impenitent shall be cast into a pit, “the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever.*”

In the last day, “The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.” When the judgment scene closes, all that have not an interest in Christ, “*Shall go away into everlasting punishment.*” All this figurative language is employed to describe the penalty annexed to a violated law. The supreme governor of the universe is not a capricious Being, neither does he inflict punishment in an arbitrary way, or under the impulses of passion. The measure and the infliction of the punishment are according to a fixed and pre-established rule. That rule is the divine law. The everlasting punishment of the wicked, therefore, is just as certain as the continuance of God’s government and the perpetuity of his throne. Just as sure as God’s throne continues, the unconverted and finally impenitent will sink down to an eternal hell! The law has only to take its course, and this is their irremediable doom. The law must take its course, and the threatening of God must be executed, upon all those who refuse to accept the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. There is nothing more certain in all the universe than



the everlasting punishment of all those who die unconverted.

2. We are, *Secondly*, to consider the entire justice of God in consigning the unconverted and finally impenitent to this awful doom. Having proved the fact from divine testimony, could we assign no adequate reasons for the divine procedure, it would become us to bow in all humility and reverence to this decision, and say, "Just art thou, O Lord, in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works."

But our own consciences and judgments will fully acquit God of all injustice in the doom which he has determined for those who have trampled his authority and laws in the dust. I am, therefore, the more disposed to look at some of the reasons which show the entire justice of God in the everlasting destruction of the wicked, from the fact that converted men often secretly flatter themselves that they shall be saved, because it would be unjust in God to cast them off for ever. This is one of the grand delusions of Satan: a species of sophistry that has lured thousands down to the pit of never-ending despair.

There is nothing which the great adversary so much labors to prevent, as the awakening of a sinner to a sense of his own sinfulness in the sight of God. When the truth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, does break in upon the mind—when conscience is summoned to her office, and the soul is constrained to look inward upon herself, and take a view of her numberless sins—then Satan endeavours to inspire that mind with the belief that the most of those sins were unavoidable, and therefore that it would be unjust in God to

cast the sinner down to the burning pit on account of them. This view of the subject is very soothing and grateful to the feelings of an impenitent sinner, who has been made in a slight degree sensible of his transgressions. Many an awakened sinner has stopped here, embraced this soul-ruining delusion, and gone down to an endless perdition. Now the broad position which I take, is this, that every sinner deserves everlasting death, and that in inflicting endless punishment upon him, God only gives him his desert.

(1.) This is evident from the conviction of all enlightened minds. The very first work which the Holy Spirit does, in operating savingly upon an unrenewed mind, is to fasten upon the heart and conscience this conviction. I never knew, I never heard of a converted person, who, when his eyes were opened to the light of divine truth, did not feel that he deserved everlasting death—did not feel that it would be perfectly right in God to cast him off for ever. Among all those who are truly converted to God, there is an entire coincidence of sentiment, a perfect uniformity of conviction on this point. Can we suppose that the very first work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, is to lead all who are regenerated into an error? Or shall we not rather conclude that that sentence, which under the Spirit's convincing and illuminating power we are led to pronounce upon ourselves, is in accordance with the principles of eternal rectitude? This is the first consideration which I wish to submit: that every truly converted and enlightened man feels that it would be perfectly just in God to cast him off for ever.

(2.) *Secondly*, I remark, that the whole work of human redemption proceeds upon the supposition that

man deserves endless punishment. The grand reason why it was necessary for Christ to die, was, that he might bear the punishment that was justly due to the sinner. Observe the reason which St. Paul states why God set forth his son to be a propitiation. It was "to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here we are told that the sinner so truly deserves all the wrath that hangs over him, that God himself could not have continued to be just, had he not poured out that wrath upon a substitute, upon whom the sinner's transgressions are laid. And all that ransomed throng around the Eternal's throne, ascribe the whole praise and glory of their rescue to the riches of infinite grace. There is not a saint in glory that feels he has escaped endless death on the ground of his own merit; he knows he has been saved from the pit by the redeeming mercy of Christ. This being admitted, nothing is more certain than that the sinner deserves everlasting death.

(3.) I remark, *Thirdly*, that this is evident from the very nature of the law.

Sin is the transgression of the law. We have already shown that the penalty annexed to the divine law is eternal death. He who breaks the law, therefore, deserves eternal death. We must admit this, or declare that the law of God is not just; which is precisely equivalent to declaring that God himself is not just, for the law is a transcript of the divine will and mind.

There is no alternative, if the sinner is not to blame, for breaking the law of God; if, for every single sin he commits, he does not deserve the damnation of hell,

then God's law is not just : the sinner is not living under the government of a righteous Being. This is the inevitable conclusion to which you must come. But who will venture to take this ground ? Do not the Scriptures declare that the divine law is just, and holy, and good ; and that the sinner is utterly without excuse ? Do they not describe the sinner as a voluntary rebel against the Most High ; and affirm that he deserves all the punishment which the violated law threatens to inflict on him ? Do they not distinctly declare that so unquestionably merited is that endless misery to which every transgressor is doomed, that, should God fail to inflict it, unless the sinner avails himself of the proffered mercy in Christ, He would cease to be a good, and holy, and righteous Being ?

(4.) Again : the position that we have laid down in relation to the desert of the sinner, is proved by the text, "The wages of sin is death." This refers, not only to the fact, but to the equity of the penalty annexed to the infraction of the divine law. "*Wages*" is the pay or reward given for labor. "*Death*," endless death, is not merely the consequence which will certainly follow sin, but the reward or recompense, which is due to a sinner, just as wages are due to a labourer when his work is done. The sinner deserves death, just as much as the labourer deserves his pay when he has completed his day's work. He has no more reason to complain than the labourer would have, who agreed to work for certain stipulated wages. He knew beforehand what would be the consequence of breaking the law. He therefore tramples on the authority of God, knowing what the issue will be.

(5.) A view of the sanctions of the divine law will



bring us back to the same conclusion—that the sinner *deserves* eternal death. These sanctions are suitable and proper, whether we consider the character of *the Being from whom they emanate*, or of *the beings whom they are intended to influence*.

THEY ARE SUITABLE AS IT RESPECTS THE CHARACTER OF THE BEING FROM WHOM THEY EMANATE. What could be more suitable to the character of an infinite Being, than that he should enforce the laws he ordains with sanctions promising infinite good, and threatening infinite evil? God will live for ever, and during all His unending existence, obedience to His laws will be pleasing to Him, and every act of disobedience infinitely displeasing. There never will come a time when he will cease to look upon sin with utter abhorrence. How can He, therefore, enforce His laws, with motives that stop short of eternity?

*These sanctions are suitable and proper as it respects the beings whom they are intended to influence.* It is suitable to the nature of an intelligent and reasoning mind that it should be governed by motives—that it should be ruled by laws that propose eternal good to be gained, and eternal evil to be avoided—that promise immortal rewards and endless punishment. Immortal intelligences cannot be governed by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things. If you wish to rule an immortal spirit by motives, those motives must have impressed upon them the image and superscription of eternal things. Every one, therefore, must see that the promise of an endless and inconceivable glory is not unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or to the case of man. And is

there not the same propriety in the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery? \*

God governs angelic beings by the same law that he does human creatures. Some of this order of beings "kept not their first estate." They fell. We are told, that they have gone into everlasting fire, prepared for them. If it be not *unjust* to punish them *for ever*, on what ground will any man argue, that it is unjust to punish *human transgressors for ever*?

(6.) Again: If sin be such a tremendous evil, that it could not be pardoned, and the divine government sustained, without the infinite sacrifice on Calvary—if, in the view of the Judge of all the earth, it be so pregnant with evil, as to render it necessary that the Son of God should become incarnate, and suffer all he did in the flesh, and on the cross, for its atonement, is it not most manifest that he who commits sin merits everlasting punishment? Oh, who that listens to the dying groans of Calvary, or looks at yonder blood-stained cross, where hangs in agony the bleeding Lamb of God, can ever question whether sin deserves *endless death*?

(7.) Once more, I remark, that the very fact, that God has threatened to punish the violation of his law with eternal death, is, in itself, the highest proof that the sinner deserves everlasting punishment. When you read in the word of God, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," "They shall go away into everlasting punishment," do you think it safe to question the equity of this allotment? Will you call your maker to the bar, and judge him by the law of your

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\* Baxter's Call, p. 32.

preconceived opinions? Are you wiser, or better, or more righteous than the everlasting Jehovah? Must the God of heaven come to you to learn wisdom? Must infinite holiness be corrected and set right by a worm; by a poor sinful creature that cannot keep himself pure for a single hour? Where were you when the Almighty made his laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Oh, are you not a creature of yesterday—one, whose breath is in his nostrils, and entirely dependent on God? How rash, how presumptuous for such a creature to undertake to pronounce upon the conduct of the infinitely perfect God!

(8.) And this leads me to remark again, that it is not possible for impenitent and unconverted men to be competent judges of *the desert of sin*. The felon accuses the law and judge of cruelty, when the sentence is pronounced upon him. The immoral, that are cut off from the fellowship and privileges of the church, almost always complain that great injustice has been done them. In cases like this, the offender is too partial to form a right estimate of the equity of the sentence pronounced against him. He judges from his feelings, which blind his reason. It is precisely so with impenitent sinners. They do not look at the subject impartially, and in all its bearings. Allow me to say, my dear hearer, you can never fully know the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin. And you can never fully know the evil of sin, till you fully know the excellency of the soul, which sin debases and deforms—till you fully know the excellency of holiness, which sin tarnishes and obliterates—till you fully understand the reason and excellency of the divine glory, which sin violates and despises.

You can never fully know the evil of sin, till you comprehend the infinite excellence, and power, and holiness of the great and glorious God, against whom it is committed.

(9.) There is still another consideration to which I wish to advert, to show the entire justice of God, in pouring endless punishment upon the finally impenitent. A remedy, an antidote to the evils of sin, has been provided. This provision has been made at an immense expense. The ransom price by which the sinner's soul has been bought from the curse of the law, is the blood of the incarnate Son of God. This antidote, this remedy, this deliverance, is offered to all. The unconverted refuse to accept it. They choose to abide under the law, and be tried by its high and stern requirements. How, then, can they complain of the injustice of that penalty which they choose to meet, and endure in their own person, rather than accept deliverance from it through the blood of Christ? Oh, how blind and infatuated unconverted men are, who talk of the injustice of *endless punishment*! Just consider how the case stands with you, unconverted hearer! You are the creature of God. He made you for himself. You were under infinite obligations to love and obey him. He gave you all the mercies and blessings that you have ever enjoyed. In return, he required your obedience to a law which in itself was good, and just, and holy, and which had for its object your happiness, and the happiness of all intelligent beings, as well as his own glory. *This law* he forbids you violating, under pain of eternal death. And what have you done? Why, you have most wilfully and wickedly violated that law times



without number. You have not regarded the authority of God, nor respected his law, nor cared for his glory. You have actually raised up your rebellious arm

“Against the throne and monarchy of God!”

By your sins you have done all you could to rob him of his glory, and to destroy the happiness of all created intelligences; and this, too, when he told you, if you did it, your end would be eternal death! And now, can you talk of the injustice of God in punishing you for ever? Mercy has offered to spread her wings over you, and shelter you from the coming storm, but you have spurned her away from you. From the condemnation of the law under which you were justly lying, the Son of God offered to redeem you. To accomplish this object he became incarnate and suffered and died, and rose from the dead, and has gone up to stand before the throne of God to plead for you. As the result of His mediatorial work, the Holy Spirit has been sent down to strive with you, and the offers of everlasting life have been proclaimed in your hearing. But you have refused those offers. You choose to remain under the curse of the law, and in a state of rebellion against God; and can you complain, then, if He pours that curse upon you unto the uttermost? If you will not obey God—if you will not submit to His authority—if you will not accept of His offers of pardon, God must send you down to perdition, or else abdicate His eternal throne. And has it indeed come to this, that you demand of the Most High, that He should lay down his sceptre, and give up His empire, in order that you may live in eternal rebellion, and yet be spared an

endless death? Now look at sin, and see what a demand it makes, and then tell me if you do not think it deserves endless punishment.

I cannot do this subject justice in a single discourse, and shall, therefore, have to defer farther remarks on this topic till next Sunday evening.

I cannot think of bringing this series of discourses to a conclusion yet. You must allow me, my unconverted friend, to press the truth still farther upon your attention. I must say to you, as Ruth did to Naomi, “entreat me not to leave you, nor to turn aside from following after you.” Were it a subject of trifling importance, I would not come so repeatedly on this unwelcome errand, but when I reflect that your everlasting all is at stake, I cannot cease to cry aloud. I cannot cease to lift up my voice, to endeavour to show you your transgressions and your sins. I appeal to you—ought I not to be solicitous for you, when I behold you treading on the crumbling edge of the precipice that beetles over the deep and awful gulf of death? THIS, unconverted hearers, is your present condition. As the eternal God liveth, before whom I now stand, I have not the least hope of meeting one of you in heaven, unless you are converted! I utterly despair of beholding one of you at the right hand of God, unless you can be prevailed upon to turn from the path that you are now travelling, and flee to Christ for refuge. Has not Christ himself said, “except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God?”

No man ever did—no man ever will, enter heaven any other way. All that innumerable throng that stand on Mount Zion, and sing the high praises of

God, were born again before they took a single step towards that celestial world, and all who have died unregenerate, as God is true, have gone down to an *eternal hell*. “Marvel not that I say unto you, *ye must be born again.*”

In concluding, then, I beg of you to consider this one fact,—“*the wages of sin is death.*” The impenitent and unconverted sinner will die for ever. This is as certain, as that God is on His throne. And you, dear friend, are not you the very person of whom I have been speaking? Have you ever truly repented before God? You have indeed not been idle in this world. You have been at work. You have earned wages, and you are going on daily earning more and more; but they are the wages of *sin*—and do not forget that the wages of sin is *death—endless death*. Oh, what wrath you are treasuring up for yourselves! what awful death-pangs, which will endure, not simply for a night, but *for ever and ever!* Oh, the groans and shrieks, and gnashing of teeth that there will be in the pit, when the last soul inquires of its fellow, how long these agonies must endure, and receives this reply, “*For ever—for ever;*” and ten thousand voices are heard all along the burning surge, “These agonies must be endured *for ever, for ever!*” This, unconverted hearer, is to be the wages that thou wilt receive! When thousands and millions of years have passed away, thy sufferings will be no nearer to a close, than they were in the beginning. By delaying thy repentance and refusing to serve God, thou art going right forward to plunge into these endless torments. God himself declares it is so. He calls after thee and entreats thee to stop. He declares that

He has no pleasure in thy death ; but he solemnly assures thee that if thou turn not, thou wilt soon lie down in everlasting sorrow—thou wilt reap the bitter fruits of thy disobedience in the unquenchable fires of hell. This is no overwrought picture of my imagination : it is the plain, sober testimony of the Bible—the unchangeable declaration of that God in whose hands are life and death. “The wages of sin is death.”

Have you not committed a great many sins ? Here you see what the consequence is to be. Here is a point of observation where you can stand and survey the field before you. From this eminence of divine truth, you can see, if you will, precisely where your path will terminate. “The wages of sin is death !” If you shut your eyes upon this truth, or try, by sophistry, to reason it away, all this will not alter the fact. This truth will meet you with a sternness and reality that you cannot gainsay when you come to die. It will meet you with a fearful aspect at the judgment bar. You must turn to God, or die for ever. “*The wages of sin is death.*”



## DISCOURSE VII.

### OBJECTIONS TO THE ENDLESS PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED SILENCED.

“That every mouth may be stopped.”—Rom. iii. 9.

HE who stands near the burning crater of Vesuvius, or amid the tremendous glaciers of the Alps, beholds a display of sublimity, and of omnipotent power, that almost overwhelms the mind, and that melts down every feeling into an emotion of awe and profound reverence. So, unquestionably, when God riseth up to judge the earth, when, at his bidding, the fires of perdition kindle around the ungodly, every complaint, every objection will be instantly silenced. If nothing else, the dread majesty that encompasseth the Most High, and that simple, awful word, “*depart*,” that goes forth from his dread fiat, will stop the sinners mouth. But it is not the majesty of his throne, nor the fires of perdition, upon which he relies to stop the mouths of sinners. He is willing to argue the matter with them, and show them, from the principles of eternal rectitude, that they deserve endless death.

The Apostle, in that part of the epistle from which our text is taken, presents a series of considerations which show that the divine law, when applied to hu-

man conduct, reveals the unquestionable truth, that every human creature is a sinner—is fearfully guilty before God, so that no one can urge a plea for life, the favour of God, or any positive good on the ground of his own righteousness. *The law stops his mouth.* The Apostle also shows that the sinner can render no reasonable excuse for his conduct, can urge no valid objection against the execution of the sentence of the law, or the infliction of the punishment it threatens. The law, slighted and broken by the sinner, stops his mouth. He cannot say one word against the justice of God in his eternal destruction.

In our last discourse we were led to contemplate the same truth—the *certainly* and justice of the endless punishment of the wicked. We intimated, at the close of our discourse, that some further observations might be offered by way of illustrating the justice of God in consigning all the unconverted and finally impenitent to the endless torments of perdition. To this topic your attention will now be directed. And we hope and pray, that all the idle objections which men sometimes raise against this awful truth may be so scattered and chased away before the broad light of divine testimony, that every unconverted man in this audience will feel that his mouth is stopped, that he has nothing to say if God sends him down eternally to the pit. One thing is certain, if his mouth is not stopped here, it will be stopped in eternity. When the unconverted sinner stands at the bar of Christ, he will stand there mute and speechless. His mouth will be stopped then: then, he will not only see that he is doomed to everlasting death, but that he dies under the dreadful sword of unsullied justice.

This subject is one which is invested with terrible majesty, and overwhelming dread. I return to it with deep and solemn awe. Were it consistent with the everlasting safety of my unconverted friends, to draw the curtain, and shut out of view the drawn, dread, glittering sword of divine wrath, which justice is waving over their heads, how readily would I do so! How gladly would I take my stand this evening under the broad, bright, outstretched snowy wings of the angel of mercy, and speak to you of the divine compassion, and of the infinite riches of free grace! But how is it possible that men should be willing to accept of Christ as a Saviour, a deliverer from the desert of a punishment, that they are not sensible that they have merited? The secret belief is cherished in almost every unconverted heart that it would not be right in God, to cast off for ever, those who are decent and moral in their conduct, although they are not truly converted. While this belief is cherished, men will never receive the atonement. For if they do not deserve endless death, what need is there of an atonement to take away their guilt?

If, then, you are saved, my dear hearers, you must see how certain it is that when God shall lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, you will be condemned—how certain it is the hail of His wrath will sweep away this refuge of lies, and the waters of His roused indignation will overflow every hiding-place in which you trust.

1. The first remark, then, that I would offer in the farther illustration of this subject, is, that it is evident that God's justice is entirely vindicated in the ever-

lasting destruction of sinners, *from the consideration of their sinfulness.*

To illustrate this remark, we may consider either the infinitely evil nature of all sin, or how much sin every transgressor has committed.

*First : The infinitely evil nature of all sin.* Most obviously it cannot be unjust in God to inflict upon the sinner all the punishment that his sin deserves. The very idea of *deserving* a penalty implies that that penalty is *just*.

Another obvious principle is this, that every crime deserves a greater or less punishment, in proportion as the crime itself is greater or less. If a fault deserves punishment, the greater the fault, the greater is the punishment it deserves. Therefore, the severity, or dreadfulness of any punishment is no argument against the justice of it, provided there be a proportion between the crime and the punishment. Hence, if there be such a thing as a fault *infinitely heinous*, it will be entirely *just* to inflict upon him who commits that fault a punishment *infinitely dreadful*. A crime is more or less heinous, according as we are under greater or less obligations to the contrary. This is self-evident. And hence, the crime of *hating another*, is in proportion to a man's obligation to love that individual. It is your duty to love all the individuals of your species. Should you hate any one of them, this would be sinful. Should you hate a man who had injured you, and shown himself your enemy, this would be wrong, for you are commanded to love your enemies. But it would be still more sinful to hate one who had ever been kind to you, and shown himself your friend, and that, for the simple



reason that you are under higher obligations to love him than you are your enemy. Still more criminal would it be in you, to hate the mother who bore you, who watched with tender solicitude over your infant years, and has never grown weary in wearing herself out to minister to your happiness. The sin in this case would acquire increased heinousness, from the increased obligation there rests upon every human being to love a tender mother. Now who does not see that the crime of hating God would be vastly greater than that of hating a parent—nay, that it would be *infinitely* great: for we are under infinite obligations to love God? Our obligations to love a being, are in proportion to his loveliness. But God is a being infinitely lovely. He hath infinite excellence and beauty. We are under infinite obligations to God on account of his beneficence to us. He created us. He gives us life, and breath, and all things. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. He hath redeemed us by the blood of His son; we are, therefore, under infinite obligations to love Him. Every unconverted man—every sinner hates, dislikes, is opposed to the character of God; and hence the Apostle says, “that the carnal or unrenewed mind is enmity against God.” *Again*: the crime of *despising, and casting contempt on another*, is proportionally more or less *heinous* as a man is under greater or less obligations to honor that individual. If a soldier were to despise, and treat with indignity, his fellow soldier, this would be wrong, because we are commanded to “*honor all men.*” But the criminality of his conduct would be increased, were he to offer the same treatment to an officer placed over him, and for the simple reason that he is under increased obliga-

tions to honour that officer. Still more criminal would his conduct be, if he were to cast contempt upon the highest commanding officer in the regiment to which he belongs, and that for the reason just adverted to, that he is under still higher and increased obligation to respect this officer.

Who does not see that this man's guilt would be vastly increased, were he to despise and cast contempt on God? The guilt in one respect would become infinite: for our obligation to honour any being is in proportion to the dignity and honourableness of that being. But God is a being infinitely honourable. He possesses infinite greatness, majesty and glory. He is infinitely exalted above the highest officer, or the greatest potentates of the earth, and the highest angels in heaven—and we are under infinite obligations to honor him. But every unconverted man—every sinner, despises God, and casts contempt upon His Majesty. This is the very essence of sin.

Once more I remark: The fault of *disobeying another* is greater or less as a man is under greater or less obligations to obey that individual.

It would be wrong to disobey an inferior magistrate—but the crime would be greatly increased were we to set at defiance the supreme authority in the land; and this increased criminality of our conduct would be owing simply to the increased obligation we are under to respect and obey the supreme authority of the country. But who does not see that it would be infinitely more criminal to refuse to obey God, than any earthly potentate or power, since we are under infinitely higher obligations to respect his authority?

Our obligation to obey any being is in proportion

to his authority over us. God's authority over us is infinite. The ground of his right to our obedience is infinitely strong, for he is infinitely worthy to be obeyed himself, and we have an absolute, universal, and infinite dependence upon him. But every unconverted man, every impenitent sinner, refuses to obey God, tramples on his laws, and sets his authority at defiance.

Now it is abundantly obvious that every sin against God implies all the hatred, and contempt, and disobedience which we have been considering. Sin, therefore, being a violation of infinite obligations, is a crime infinitely heinous, and consequently deserves infinite punishment. This conclusion cannot be evaded. If God be a Being of infinite perfections, and we are under infinite obligations to him, then the violation of a single one of those obligations deserves infinite punishment. If there be any evil in sin against God, there is certainly infinite evil. If unconverted men had never committed but one sin, this, on the principle of justice, would shut them up unto everlasting condemnation. When the sinner comes to understand the immense, the immeasurable guilt involved in one sin—in hating, despising, and disobeying God, his mouth will be stopped, and he will have nothing to say why he should not go down eternally to the pit. Thus we see, that a view of the infinitely evil nature of all sin, vindicates the justice of God in the everlasting destruction of sinners.

*Second :* The same truth will be established if we only consider how much sin every transgressor has committed. On this point there will be less need of enlargement, from the fact, that in two previous discour-

ses, we have called your attention to a consideration of the multiplied transgressions, the exceeding sinfulness, the desperate wickedness, and the awful guilt of every descendant of Adam. I will, therefore, at this time, barely remark, that all unconverted men are not only sinners, but great sinners. They have committed, not simply one sin, but innumerable sins. They are full of sin. Their guilt is like great mountains heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven. They are corrupt in every part—in all their faculties—in all the principles of their nature,—their understandings, and their wills, and in all their dispositions and affections. They are altogether sinful. In them are found pride, malignity, revengefulness, hard-heartedness, obstinacy, perverseness, incorrigibleness, inflexibleness in sin, that will not be overcome by threatenings or promises, by awakenings or encouragements, by judgments or mercies—neither by that which is terrific, nor that which is winning. The very blood of God our Saviour will not win the heart of a wicked man. And when that wicked man stands at last at the bar of Christ, and hears the sentence that dooms him to everlasting punishment, will not his mouth be stopped? When all his sins rise up around him like dark mountains, will he have one word to say why he should not go away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? No : his mouth will be stopped !

2. A *Second* general remark that I would offer in illustration of the subject under consideration relates to our treatment of God. The remark is this : That there can be no injustice in God's treating men as they



his dealings with men will be suitable to their disposition and practice. “With the merciful man thou wilt show thyself merciful: With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright: With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure: *And with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.*” If unconverted men are left to sink into the pit of never-ending wo, they will be dealt with exactly according to their own dealing. This point I will endeavour to illustrate by several specifications:

1. *First*, then, I remark, that if God casts off unconverted men, and leaves them eternally to perish, it will be exactly agreeable to their treatment of him. Unconverted men do not love God: they refuse to comply with that first and highest command in his Law, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength.*” They refuse to comply with that high and holy demand which Jehovah makes upon them, “*My son, give me thy heart.*” They do not give their hearts to God, but to the world.

When God, however, saves a sinner; when he brings a poor lost soul home to Christ, forgives all his sins, and makes him his own child, there is expended upon that soul a love, the greatness of which it will take up all eternity to express and declare. Now why, I ask, should God be obliged to express such wonderful love to sinners who have exercised no love to him? Would it not be right, would it not be perfectly just if He should treat them as they treat him? Impenitent men do not care for the happiness, or interests, or glory, or honour of God. Under what obligation, then, is God placed, to care for them?

2. Again: All impenitent and unconverted men

slight God ; and why may not God *justly* slight them ? Impenitent men are told that such and such things are contrary to the will of a holy God, and against his honour, but they care not for that. God calls upon them, and exhorts them to be more tender of his honour, but they go on in the same reckless way as before. Now who will pretend to say that it would not be right, that it would not be perfectly just in God to slight these sinners ? Are they more honourable than He, that he must be obliged to make much of them, how light soever they make of him or his glory.

3. Again : On what principle can it be shown that God is obliged to bestow salvation on those who are utterly ungrateful for the mercies he has already bestowed. God has conferred upon impenitent men many acts of kindness, for no one of which he has ever received any suitable return. He has watched over them, and preserved, and provided for them, and followed them with mercy all their days, and yet they have continued sinning against Him. He has given them food and raiment, but they have improved both in the service of sin. He has preserved them while they slept, but when they awoke it was to return to their old business of sinning. Notwithstanding all this ingratitude, God has still continued his mercy. His kindness, however, has never won their hearts, or brought them to a more grateful behaviour towards Him. He has greatly added to his mercy by giving his son a sacrifice for sin, and the strivings of the Spirit, whereby a most precious opportunity of salvation has been put into their hands. But for all this he has received no thanks. As his mercies have multiplied, their ingratitude and hardness of heart have increased. What

ideas can we have of justice, to suppose that God is obliged to keep such men out of the pit—that he is obliged to exalt them to seats of blessedness in Heaven?

4. Again : Impenitent and unconverted men voluntarily choose to be with Satan, in his enmity and opposition to God. It is unjust, then, in God to leave them with Satan in his punishment? They do not choose to be on God's side, but on the side of his great adversary. No matter how much God calls and counsels them, *there* they remain with *his foe* ! They choose rather to hearken to the foe of God, than to God himself. They give themselves up to his power and government in opposition to God !

May not God, then, in perfect justice give them up to him, and leave them in his power to accomplish their ruin? If men will be with God's enemy, and on his side, why is God obliged to redeem them out of his hands? Will not this view of the matter stop the mouth of every unconverted man?

5. Once more I remark : As unconverted men refuse to hear God's calls to them, it will be perfectly just if he refuses to hear their calls to him at the last. How long and loud does God call upon impenitent sinners ! They, however, have no leisure to attend to his calls. They have their worldly business to mind—their lusts to gratify—their carnal pleasures to enjoy. The ministers of Christ stand and plead with them in God's name, Sabbath after Sabbath, and spend their strength, and wear out life in doing so—but they are not moved by all this. They go on still in their sins. What, then, can be more just than that God at length should rise up and say, “ Because I have called

and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”

6. Finally, I remark, that the justice of God in the everlasting destruction of impenitent sinners, appears in the fact that his mercy, kindly offered to them, has only led them to sin more and more.

Unconverted men take encouragement to sin against God, on the very presumption that God will show them mercy when they seek it. May he not then *justly* refuse them that mercy upon which they have so wickedly presumed ? Must he lay himself open to all manner of affronts, and yield himself up to the abuses of vile men, though they disobey, despise, and dishonour Him as much as they choose ; and when they have done, shall not his mercy and pardoning grace be in his own power, and at his own disposal ? Must he be obliged to dispense it at their call ? Must he receive these bold and vile contemners of his majesty, when it suits them to ask it ? Must he forgive all their sins, and not only so, but adopt them into his family, and make them his children, and bestow upon them eternal glory ? Ah, rely upon it, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, every mouth will be stopped. Not one voice in the whole length and breadth of the universe will be lifted up to say, it is



wrong. The lost and condemned sinner will feel himself that it is right and infinitely just.

Unconverted hearer, reflect for one moment upon this aggravation of your guilt; that you have been a worse enemy to God for his being a merciful God. Had you not heard that he was a merciful God, you would not have gone on in sin, and put off your repentance up to this time. Because God's mercy was so great, you thought you could repent at any time. How just it would be, therefore, if he should now refuse to extend mercy to you!

One has well remarked that "There is something peculiarly heinous in sinning against the mercy of God more than other attributes. There is such base and horrid ingratitude, in being worse to God, because he is a Being of infinite goodness and grace, that it, above all things, renders wickedness vile and detestable."\* When this view of the sinner's guilt comes to be fully laid open, then, indeed, every mouth will be stopped.

I might here close my remarks on the topic under consideration, and turn to every unconverted man and ask him how he expects to meet the account of the last day? Oh, my hearer, you will not be able to justify yourself then! You will not be able to say anything against the justice of God in your eternal condemnation *then*! Your mouth will be stopped. Perhaps, however, now you have some objections to urge. I will consider a few of these.

1. The first objection that I shall notice, is this: That the case of unconverted men after all is not so

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\* Edwards' Works, vol. iii. p. 516.

desperate as has been represented, since Christ, in some way or other, has lowered the terms of the divine law, and brought down its demands to a point at which they can be reached by human infirmity. The principle here assumed is utterly false. The law of God can no more be altered than the character of God can, of which it is a transcript. "The law is *just*, and can never mitigate of its sanctions. It is good, and must for ever continue so, whatever may become of those who are subject to its dominion."

We might well ask, which of the commands has the Lord Jesus lowered? He summed up the whole decalogue in two precepts, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself:" which of these two has he set aside? Which has he dispensed with? Or what measure of abatement has he made in either of them? If this law, before the coming of Christ, required too much, how could it have been holy, and just, and good? If, on the contrary, it required only what was necessarily due, *then* has not Christ, if he has at all lowered its demands, robbed God of the obedience that was due to him, and thus become himself the minister and patron of sin?

We again repeat the declaration: *the divine law* cannot be changed. The everlasting God himself, while he remains the unchangeable holy God, cannot reduce the demands of his own law. Such an act would divest him of his own glory, and give universal license to violate with impunity the obligations which every rational being of necessity owes to the Creator. The law of God, being a perfect transcript of his own

mind and will, is as immutable as himself.\* The idea, therefore, that Christ has in any way modified the divine law, and accommodated its requirements to the infirmities of human nature, is altogether erroneous. He has not let down its requirements a single iota. The moment you became an accountable moral being, that law became the divinely appointed rule of your conduct. Its high and holy precepts were help up before you, and you were told that *eternal death* was the awful penalty threatened to the transgressor. But notwithstanding this threatening, you became a transgressor. There is not a divine command that you have not disobeyed ten thousand times. On you, therefore, lies the curse of God's violated LAW. Christ has offered to remove that curse, but you have neglected or spurned his offer.

God has repeatedly called after you, and told you if you would repent, and return, and bow down at the foot of the cross, all your guilt should be cancelled. But you have treated with utter disregard this divine assurance, and are here this evening *impenitent*, with all your sins upon you, exposed, and *justly* exposed, to the penalty of God's violated law: which is never-ending death. Look at God's trampled law, and its fearful penalty, and surely your mouth will *be stopped*.

(2.) Another objection to the doctrine we have been inculcating, is the groundless assertion that men *do*, and *will* suffer all they deserve at the hand of God for their sins in this world. We have already shown in a preceding discourse, the utter fallacy and falsehood of this assertion; that the present life is not a period

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\* See Tyng on "*The Law*."

of retribution, but of probation ; that after death comes the judgment, the retributions, the penalties of a violated law. The divine admonition is, “ Fear him who, *after* he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.”

There is no sort of force in the remark that it would be *unjust* to punish a man through eternity for a sin committed in a moment. Unconverted men sin all their lives, and if they were permitted to live here through eternity, they would continue to sin through all its unending ages. But independently of this, sin, being a violation of infinite obligations, is infinitely heinous, and therefore deserves infinite punishment. Hence God awards to it a punishment that is infinite in duration, though doubtless varied in degree, according as it is more or less heinous.

What legislative body ever thought of graduating punishment by the length of time occupied in the commission of crime ! The incendiary who fires your dwelling, does it in a moment of time, and yet, if the strong hand of the law can be laid upon him, the mildest punishment he can expect is imprisonment for life. The guilt of the crime is not measured by the length of time it required for its perpetration, but by the nature of the obligations it violates, and the consequences with which it is pregnant.

Again ; I remark, that there is an essential and radical error connected with the idea, that the sinner is punished all he deserves in this life. If this were the fact, every transgressor would not only escape hell, and go up to heaven ; but he would do this on the ground of his own desert. On this principle no one would be indebted at all to the mercy of God, or to the blood of Christ for his salvation. The trans-



gressor having suffered here all he deserved—having borne in his own person the penalty of the violated law—having received the entire wages of sin, would have a right to demand an entrance into heaven on the ground of justice.

If the sinner suffers in this life all he deserves at the hand of God on account of his sins, then, most manifestly, he has no need of Christ. He is not under the slightest obligation to the son of God for his redemption. He goes to heaven on the ground of his own *deserts*. If this be admitted, we shall have to admit that Christ came to this world on a very unnecessary errand. For had he not come, all men would have been infallibly saved, by suffering, as they now do, all they deserve in this life!

Who is willing to risk his soul on such a belief—a belief that gives the lie to the whole record of divine truth, and writes *contempt* on all the tears and toil, the groans, and agony, and death of the son of God? If there be one thing more plainly revealed in the Bible than another, it is that we are to be saved solely, and alone, through the blood of Christ. And yet this objection which we are combating, has for its foundation the utter rejection of the merits of Christ as the ground of the sinner's hope: and that too in the very face of the divine declaration, that, "There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus."

(3.) A third objection raised to the doctrine that we have been maintaining, is the gratuitous and unscriptural assertion, *that the fires of perdition will one day cease to burn, or that those who are shut up there, will, by some means or other, be delivered from their dreadful prison.*

This idea is utterly at war with the whole testimony of God's word. It declares that "as the tree falleth so it shall lie," "That there is no device, nor work in the grave" by which men's state can be changed. That the punishment into which the wicked go, is "*everlasting punishment*;" that the fire into which they sink, is "*everlasting fire*"—"fire that can never be quenched."

But even were there scriptural grounds for such a belief—what a forlorn hope—what perfect madness would this be, to go to heaven by choice through the fires of hell, rather than the favour of the Redeemer's blood? To pass to eternal glory through the burning pit, rather than go up Calvary's steep, along under the shadow of the Redeemer's cross.

But here again, I remark, that this whole doctrine is founded on vital error. If sinners are ever released from the pit, and are released because they have suffered all their sins deserve, they will not be indebted to Christ at all, for their salvation.

When they go up, and reach heaven's unfolded gate, the first sounds that enter their ear, will be the notes of the new song, ascending from ten thousand ransomed, glorified spirits, saying to the Lamb, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and *hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*" Every ransomed soul now in heaven, joins this song. But these souls which come reeking up from purgatorial fires—from the deep caverns of hell, cannot join in this new song. Christ has not redeemed them by his blood. They have *suffered* the punishment *due* to their sins. They have paid

the debt in their own personal sufferings. They are under no obligations to Christ. They will have to take their stand in a company by themselves, and sing some other song, besides the song of the Lamb!

Oh, how utterly false must be that belief which holds out the prospect of entering heaven in any other way than by the blood of Christ!

All these attempts to make a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, will be found in the end to be utterly vain; they will be found, in the emphatic words of the prophet, but, "*a refuge of lies.*" There is no hope—no remission of sins, but through the blood of Christ. Release from the dread penalty of the violated law the sinner can never receive, after he passes the gates of death. And he cannot receive release here, unless he humbles himself at the feet of his Saviour, and by an act of submission makes an unconditional surrender of himself into His hands. While he remains unhumbled, unsubdued, unconverted, the awful penalty of the violated law hangs over him, and no sooner will the period of probation close, than that penalty will be inflicted. Then the wrath of God will be poured out to the uttermost. *Then*, if never before, the sinner's mouth will be *stopped*.

(4.) Another delusion, by which unconverted men sometimes blind their eyes to a perception of the danger of their situation, is drawn from a confused and indistinct idea of the atonement as being necessarily efficacious in their case, provided they exert themselves to live an upright and moral life. This is a most fatal rock on which thousands split. A few

remarks on this point, therefore, seem particularly called for.

There are only two ways in which we can obtain the favour of God ; the one is, by keeping the law wholly and entirely ; and the other, by accepting the terms of the Gospel.

Christ has made “ *a full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the whole world.*” If we are willing to give up our own pretensions to righteousness, and rely, for our acceptance, solely on this, we can be saved. But what is the attitude of the unconverted sinner ? How is he affected by the blood of atonement ? He stands up in proud rebellion, and utterly refuses to draw near, and claim pardon through the efficacy of that blood. He, therefore, can receive no benefit from Christ’s sacrifice. By refusing to lay hold of the cross, he practically declares that he had rather be under the condemning power of the law, than the mercy of the Gospel ! By going about to establish his own righteousness, and refusing to submit to the righteousness of God, he virtually rests his entire hopes on the law. But what does the law say ? “ The man that doeth these things,”—i. e. all the law requires—“ shall live by them.” The dreadful curse of God lights upon him ; for it is written—“ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” The law has no other terms. Its language is, “ Do this—do it all, without exception—continue in it from first to last, and you shall live ; but if you offend in a single point, your doom is irreversibly sealed, an everlasting curse must fall upon you.” Plead what you will, its denunciations are irreversible. You may say



—“I wish to obey the law.” The law, however, will answer, “Tell me not of your wishes, but do it.” Or should you declare—“I have endeavoured to keep the divine commands,” the reply will be—“Tell me of no *endeavours*, but *keep* those commands, or the dreadful curse of Jehovah falls on you.” Should you plead—“I have kept the law in almost every particular,” your plea would be met with the stern reply—“Tell me not of what you have done almost: have you obeyed it altogether? if not, you are cursed.” Were you able to plead—“I have obeyed the law from my youth up, and have never broken it, save in one instance,” you would still be without hope, “for he that keepeth the whole law and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.” Should you say—“I am sorry for my transgressions,” the law would reply—“I cannot regard your sorrows, you are under a curse.” Should you urge your case still further and say—“I will reform and never transgress again,” the law would answer—“Your reformation cannot cancel your past guilt; you are under a curse.” And though you should still press your plea and say—“If I can only find mercy for my sins, I promise and most sincerely intend to obey the law perfectly in future,” the law would reply—“I have no concern with your determination. I know no such word as mercy. I cannot alter my terms for any created being. If you come up to these terms, you have a right to life, and will need no mercy. If you fall short in any one particular, nothing remains for you but ‘everlasting destruction’ from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.”

Unconverted hearer, you who are resting on your

morality for your salvation—this is the ground on which you stand. Inasmuch as you have not come to Christ, you are under the law, and for every violation of that law the curse of God rests upon your head. Oh, whither can you turn to escape the wrath of God? Will not your mouth be stopped?

How sad and lamentable is the case of unconverted men! They are covered with guilt. They stand in the attitude of rebellion against God, and they love their rebellion, though they see the end thereof is death.

My unconverted friends, what can I do for you more? In obedience to the command of my Saviour, I have endeavoured to lift up my voice, and show you your transgressions and your sins, and also the dreadful consequences that will follow. I have done this in love, and have endeavoured to do it with fidelity. But if all I have said, and all the testimony that has been adduced from God's word, does not move you, what can I do more? Why should I proceed to hold up before you the Lamb of God, since, if you do not see your sins, and see that they deserve God's everlasting wrath, you will certainly reject him. And yet, as I stand here contemplating your case, I feel the strongest sympathies of my soul drawn towards you! Oh, what can I do for you? I know the awful danger of your situation. I never can forget that I once stood on that same awful cliff, where you now stand. If the sovereign grace and mercy of God had not awakened me from my lethargy, and plucked me from that perilous cliff, I should not be standing here to-night to plead with you. The same blindness once veiled my eyes. I was just as ready

to make excuses, just as much disposed to cast the blame of sin on God, as you are. Oh, the riches of grace!

“What am I, oh, thou glorious God!

That thou such mercies hast bestowed

On me—the vilest reptile: me!

Me in my blood thy love pass'd by,

And stopp'd, my ruin to retrieve;

Wept o'er my soul thy pitying eye,

Thy bowels yearn'd—and sounded ‘*Live.*’

Dying, I heard the welcome sound,

And pardon in thy mercy found.”

Oh, I can never thank God enough for this act of mercy!

“Praise, my soul, the God that sought thee,

Wretched wanderer, far astray;

Found thee lost and kindly brought thee,

From the paths of death away;

Praise with love's devoutest feeling,

Him who saw thy guilt-born fear,

And the light of hope revealing,

Bade the blood-stained cross appear.”

Dear, dying fellow sinners, that blood-stained cross is lifted up here to-night. Oh, that you would look towards it and live. I know too well your danger to refrain from beseeching you, by all the mercies of God, to come to an immediate decision, whether you will live any longer without Christ, under the dreadful curse of God's righteous law! Why will ye rush on to your own everlasting destruction?

Suffer me again to expostulate with you. Is it not worth your while to bestow some thought and consideration upon a state of existence, upon which you

are shortly to enter, and which will never end? Have you yet bestowed so much thought and consideration upon this subject, as to have come to a clear, scriptural, and satisfactory conclusion, whether you will spend this unending existence amid the raptures of heaven, or the agonies of the pit; whether you will be a seraph at God's right hand, or burn for ever in the lake below?

Perhaps you are fully convinced, that if you should die as you now are, you would be lost for ever; and yet you are not enough alarmed about your awful sinfulness before God, to lead you to do anything more than put forth some feeble attempts at external reformation. You have not yet resolved to go to the mercy-seat instantly, for pardon and everlasting life. Oh, deluded sinner, why do you linger and delay? Your case is desperate, and you will everlastingly perish, unless you have immediate relief. There is only one remedy adequate to this relief, and that is the blood of Christ. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Slight attempts at external reformation will not reach nor remove your deep-seated malady. Your heart must be changed, and your whole moral nature created anew.

Unconverted friends, could I draw aside the curtain this evening, and show you all that will happen within five years—could you see this and that friend, one after another, plunging into the awful pit, what would you do? When you retired from this place would you not think of what you had seen? Would you not go to more friends and urge them to flee from the wrath to come?

God sees all that I have supposed. He sees who



of this congregation will soon step off into the pit of destruction, and He has bid me come and tell you who they are. Shall I discharge my duty and tell you who they are? My hearer, if you are unconverted, you are one of them. The hour that seals your doom will speedily arrive. I declare unto you the testimony of God—will you not believe me? “The wages of sin is death.”

Were I to die to-morrow, and, after I had visited the invisible world, were I permitted to come back and tell you what I had seen, would you be willing to hear me? would you believe and regard what I should say? If so, believe me now; for you have better evidence than my word. I declare unto you the testimony of God, “*The wages of sin is death.*”

Were I permitted to preach one sermon after I had passed the gates of death, and had seen the fields of Paradise, and the deep caverns of the burning pit—would you not then wish me to speak plainly the whole truth, and would you not lay to heart what was said? And why do you not wish me to speak so to-night? Why will you not regard my present message, as though it came from the lips of a man who had been into the eternal world? for I can give you better assurance of the truth of what I say, than if I had been there and seen it with my own eyes. I declare unto you the testimony of God, “*The wages of sin is death.*” It is possible for one from the dead to deceive you; but God cannot deceive you, and he declares that “*The wages of sin is death,*”—that you lie under the curse of the law, and that unless you turn to the stronghold of a Redeemer’s righteousness without delay, you will certainly sink into the bot-

tomless pit, and there will gather over you the blackness of darkness for ever and ever. God says this to every unconverted person here. And what now, unconverted friend, do you purpose to do? Do you see your sins, and feel that you merit the divine displeasure? Are you groaning under a sense of your villainess and guilt? Do you long to be delivered?

If the Lord permits, next Sunday evening I will endeavour to point out to you the way of escape. But before another week passes by, some of these unconverted hearers may have gone to their last account! Let me, then, now say to you, "*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*" I entreat you, have immediate recourse to that blood. Go to the mercy-seat to-night. Give your heart to God before you sleep. Do not lie down another night under the weight of all your unforgiven sin; if you do, you may lie down in sorrow for ever. This truth forces itself upon my mind with awful power at this moment from the recollection of a very touching incident.

A friend of mine, who resided in Virginia, had, on one occasion, been preaching to a large audience on the importance of immediate repentance, and had presented to his hearers, as I have this evening, the certainty of the endless destruction of all those who die unconverted. There was in that audience, a gay, talented young man, who had previously lived for the world, and laughed at the idea of religion. But on this occasion the truth, accompanied with the Spirit of God, found its way to his heart. The voice of that herald of Jesus woke him from his false secur-

ity, and as the preacher proceeded, he hung upon his lips—his ears drank in every word, and more than once during that discourse, his cheeks were bedewed with tears. When he left the church, he said, with much seriousness, to a young friend, “I have made up my mind—I am determined I will not die without religion. When I have attained such an object”—specifying what it was—“I will address myself immediately to the business of my salvation.” Just three days from that time this young man was attacked with violent disease, and laid upon a dying bed. Full of alarm, he cried out, “What can I do, if I die as I now am? I am lost for ever! Oh, that I had not put off the business of my salvation. Oh, that I had begun three days ago; what shall I do?” His pains increased—his malady grew more malignant. Before he could receive any religious counsel, delirium seized upon his brain. When the sun rose, the next Sabbath morning, its earliest beams that streamed through the window of his chamber, fell on his lifeless and unbreathing corse. Unconverted hearer, what security have you, that another day will be allowed you in which to make your peace with God?

“Lo, on a narrow neck of land,  
 ’Twixt two unbounded seas you stand,  
 Yet how insensible!  
 A point of time—a moment’s space,  
 Removes you—where—where?  
 Raise, thoughtless sinner, raise thine eye,  
 . . . . .  
 Behold the balance is displayed.

See in one scale God’s holy law,  
 Mark with what force its precepts draw;

Canst thou the awful test sustain?  
 Thy works, how light! thy thoughts, how vain!  
 Behold the hand of God appears,  
 And writes in dreadful characters  
 TEKEL—thy soul is wanting found;  
 With trembling, hear the awful sound."

Then thy mouth will be for ever stopped—thy doom  
 sealed. All will be over—all will be lost. Now  
 mercy waits and pleads. Shall she plead in vain?  
 Oh, sinner, come to Christ!



## DISCOURSE VIII.

### HOW SIN IS TO BE TAKEN AWAY.

“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

JOHN i 29.

IF the wages of sin be death ; if the sinner cannot escape the consequences of sin by any might or wisdom of his own, the inquiry naturally arises, can help or deliverance be obtained from no other quarter ? Is there no door of escape—no refuge to which sinners can fly, and be shielded from the awful and endless consequences flowing from the infraction of the divine law ? Thanks be to God, we can answer this question in the affirmative. Glad tidings of mercy and salvation have been proclaimed on earth. The Gospel reveals intelligence of the most interesting character. *It* discloses the hope of pardon, and shows how it is possible for sinners to be forgiven and received into heaven without sullyng the holiness of God, compromising his truth, or infringing upon the great principles of his government.

It discloses an expedient by which the same, or even

more valuable, *moral* impressions may be made upon the mind of all God's intelligent creatures, while sinners are pardoned and saved, than if every violator of the divine law had gone down into the bottomless pit to endure everlasting suffering. This expedient, however, does not set any being free from the restraints of the divine government, but greatly contributes to sustain and uphold that government. It gives us a most affecting and impressive view of the authority of God—of the inviolability of his law, and of the eternal obligations we are under to keep that law.

The truth of these remarks will be fully illustrated in the exposition of the text, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

A distinguished American artist, who, by the power of his pencil, had immortalized his name, having completed a series of historic paintings, which represented the blessed Saviour as passing through the great and successive events connected with his personal ministry on earth, threw open the doors of his gallery, and invited his friends to come and inspect this production, upon which he had bestowed so much time and toil. It was my happiness to be one among the number to whom this invitation was tendered. The room in which the paintings were exhibited was very spacious, and when I entered it was nearly filled with those who had come on the same errand with myself. As I looked around, we seemed to be treading over the soil of Palestine, and placed amid the very scenes delineated in the New Testament. The figures on the canvass were nearly as large as the objects they represented, and stood out from the surface with such relief, as, for the moment, to inspire one with the be-

lief that it was a living scene—and all the characters represented were actually before you in living reality. The chief point of attraction in this series of historic paintings was the last in the series, where the Redeemer was represented as nailed to the cross and expiring in agony. Over him were the darkened heavens, and beneath the quaking earth.

Every eye seemed riveted on that scene : and amid all the assembled company, not a voice, not a whisper was heard. Through the whole room there was the hushed stillness of death. Upon the ear of every spectator there seemed to come from that speaking canvass a still small voice, saying, “ Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

It is just such an exhibition as this that I wish to hold up vividly before this audience to-night ; and while you are gazing upon the affecting spectacle of your Redeemer, stretched in agony upon the cross, I would not break the deep silence around me, only so far as is necessary to interpret the meaning of what you behold. Dismiss, then, your worldly meditations : call in your scattered thoughts, leave all your waking dreams of earthly happiness, and all your earth-born cares behind, and come up the sacred mount with me, and “ *Behold the Lamb of God.*”

“ Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

There is an evident allusion in the text to the sacrifices offered under the law. Several of the sacrifices, under the Mosaic dispensation, required a lamb to be slain, and offered as the prescribed victim.\* This was

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\* This was the fact in relation to the daily morning and evening sacrifice in the Temple. A lamb was offered twice a day.

peculiarly the case in the yearly and solemn sacrifice of the "PASSOVER." That institution owed its origin to an interesting fact in the history of God's chosen people. After many judgments had been sent upon the proud and unsubdued king of Egypt, to bring him into a state of submission, God determined to smite down the first born through the land with death. Accordingly the angel of destruction was to go forth on a certain night, and breathe death in every dwelling, from the palace of the monarch to the hovel of the slave. The children of Israel, however, were to be spared. Each family of them were to take a lamb and kill it, and sprinkle its blood on the lintel, and two side-posts of their door, and when the destroying angel saw the blood, he was to *Passover*, and spare the first born of that house.

The awful night in which the destroying angel went through the land, breathing death into every Egyptian dwelling, broke the fetters of bondage from off the hands of the Israelites. Their oppressors were now glad to see them depart. And that very night they rose up, and went out from the land of their servitude.

To keep up the remembrance of their deliverance from the sword of the destroying angel, and their escape from the hands of those who cruelly oppressed them, the Hebrews were required ever after, on the anniversary of that day, to kill a lamb, offer it in sacrifice to God, and eat its flesh as they did on the night of their departure from Egypt.

Several days before the appointed sacrifice was offered, a little innocent lamb was taken from the flock, separated from its mother—shut up alone where no



one came to commiserate its piteous moans and bleating. At length it was brought forth, bound, and laid on the altar. Then the sacrificial knife, while it lay there silent and unresisting, was thrust into its very vitals. Its life-blood streamed forth. Its flesh, still quivering with life, was then burned on the altar.

All this was done to point the eye forward to Christ who is "*The Lamb of God.*" As the blood of the paschal lamb reminded the Israelite, not only of his protection from the sword of the angel, but of his deliverance from the hands of his oppressors, so it was intended to teach that the blood of Jesus Christ would not only turn away the sword of Justice from the sinner's head, but break in sunder the fetters of corruption—and enable him to go forth from the slavery of Satan, into the glorious liberty of a child of God.

Jesus Christ, in whom was found spotless innocence, was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was stripped and beaten: separated from his friends, insulted, mocked and reviled, and at last nailed to a cross, and left to hang there in dreadful agony till he expired.

Behold Him on that cross! See the crimson spots, where the thorns have pressed his sacred forehead. Behold his perforated hands, and pierced side. See what anguish is depicted upon his sweet and heavenly countenance; and then remember *who* He is, and *what* he came to do! This is none other than the incarnate Son of God: *he* who was "before all worlds, and by whom all things consist—the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person—*God over all!*" He came here to save and bless our world; to save and bless the very men who crucified

him—to save and bless every sinner in this audience !  
“ *Behold the Lamb of God !* ” See how dark the heavens are over him ! What a drapery of gloom is flung over all the bright scenes of nature, while Jesus,

“ Their mighty maker dies !  
Behold the Lamb of God ! ”

As we gaze on this scene, what high and holy instruction emanates from the cross ! The grand central truth, that meets our eye in this affecting scene, is, that God, for the sake of these sufferings of his son, will pardon every sinner who comes and looks on him, and rests all his hopes of acceptance on the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice : Or, in other words, that God will accept and save every sinner who comes and stands at the foot of the cross, and casts his perishing soul on Christ ; who looks up to Jesus, dying there, and says, “ I ought to suffer through all eternity these horrid death-pangs which my Saviour endures. They are my just desert. I am guilty, but he is innocent. He endures them in my place. I believe that God is ready to pardon me now, for Christ’s sake. I will not refuse this pardon. I take thee, Eternal God, at thy word. I here surrender myself into thy hands. I hate the sins which have separated between me and thee, and for which it would be perfectly just for me to perish *for ever*. But everlastingly adored be thy name for this wonderful provision of mercy and grace in Christ. I cheerfully, cordially, eagerly embrace this provision. I rest my everlasting all upon thy promise. I will ever seek to love, and serve, and obey thee. Thy will, ever hereafter, shall be the rule of my conduct.”

The man who can stand at the foot of the cross, and in the full sincerity of his heart, give utterance to these, or similar sentiments, has embraced the Saviour. He has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is no longer under condemnation. Christ hath taken his sins away. Hence we can see the true import of the text, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

The removal of the penalty from the sinner's soul, is, as I have already remarked, *the grand central truth* which meets our eye, in "*beholding the Lamb of God.*" He hangs on the cross to take away the sins of all those who will look to this atoning sacrifice, and embrace it, as it is set forth in the word of life. "*Behold the Lamb of God !*"

1. The first remark that I would offer is, that a view of the sacrifice of Christ shows the inviolability and holiness of God's Law. Nothing is more important than that we should have right views and just conceptions of the divine law. That law must necessarily be good in every respect, since it is a perfect transcript of the mind and will of God, and in its operations tends directly to promote, in the highest possible manner, the glory of God and the happiness of every intelligent being. The infraction of this law, therefore, is an assault upon the character of God—an attempt to rob him of His glory, and to thwart His purposes of benevolence to His creatures. An act so malignant—fraught with such evil to the whole universe—could not be overlooked, or allowed to go unpunished, under the government of a wise, good, and holy being ; and hence to show that the divine law could in no case be violated with impunity, God laid

all the violations of this law, of which human creatures had been guilty, upon His Son, and then unsheathed the glittering sword of infinite justice, and bathed it in the blood of His Son—holding up to the view of the whole universe, *the inviolability of His high and holy law.*

2. *Behold the Lamb of God.* Look at the atoning sacrifice of Calvary, and you will there see the most constraining motives to urge every human creature to walk in the path of obedience. The sacrifice of Christ, by the moral impression it must make, when contemplated, upon the minds of all intelligent creatures, is eminently calculated to establish the principle of obedience, and uphold the divine government. To see the full force of this position, let us suppose, for a moment, that God had consented to take our race up into heaven without any such expression of His displeasure against sin, what would have been the effect upon those myriads of pure, loyal spirits, around the throne? What impression would have been made upon their minds, if our rebellious race had thus been received into those mansions of light, without any reparation made for so great an injury and insult to God, as every act of sin is? What would have become of the truth of God? He had declared solemnly, and by His eternal existence, that if His law was broken, the pangs of endless death should be the penalty. But here is a whole race of beings, who have broken that law times without number, and yet the penalty has not been inflicted upon them, nor upon any one appointed to stand as their substitute. After witnessing such a departure from His word, which had been pledged under such high and solemn circumstances—



could the heavenly host any longer repose confidence in the truth of God?

Again: What would become of the authority of God? As a sovereign, and the Supreme Legislator of the universe, he has issued commands and enacted laws to regulate and control the behaviour of his creatures. But here is a race of beings that have paid no sort of regard to His commands. All the angelic intelligences heard him proclaim that law. They see how contemptuously mankind have trampled on it; and if, after all this, mankind are taken up into heaven, without there being inflicted upon some one who stands as their representative, a penalty that will vindicate the honour of God's insulted law, what will become of the authority of Jehovah in heaven? The grand principle of obedience will be annihilated! The elements of revolt would thus be introduced into the very heart of God's empire!

*And then*, what would become of God's goodness? He would have permitted an act, under his government, that would inevitably pour the tide of rebellion through the celestial regions, and desolate his wide and boundless empire.

We see, therefore, that he must either abdicate His eternal throne, or inflict the penalty annexed to the violated law. And now here it is, that we behold, in the act of human redemption, the depths of infinite wisdom and grace.

Had the Most High inflicted the penalty upon the transgressor who had incurred it, without opening to him a door of escape, every sinner on this globe would have gone down to an eternal hell. But God's infinite love and boundless compassion prompted Him

to set forth His Son as our substitute—to lay on him our transgressions—to allow him to suffer in our place, and to offer us a free salvation, if we would embrace Christ as our Redeemer, and submit to Him as our rightful governor.

By such a substitution, the impression made upon the minds of all the heavenly host, provided that no sinner is pardoned except he is brought into a state of penitence and submission, would be more deep and durable than if every human transgressor had gone down for ever into the bottomless pit. When the Angelic Host saw the eternal Son, whom they had adored as God over all—when they saw the very Being, who at first awoke them into existence, laying aside the splendours and glory of the Godhead, going down to earth, becoming a man, and submitting to die on a cross in the place of this ruined race—no wonder they desired “*to look into*” this wonderful event! What a view did it give them of the holiness of God’s law, and of the impossibility of violating it without incurring eternal destruction! How were the truth, and justice, and mercy of God upheld and illustrated by the death and sacrifice of Christ! And how was His authority strengthened by such a display of His unrelenting displeasure against sin, or the violation of His law.

The same moral impression made upon the minds of the heavenly Host, this atoning sacrifice is calculated to make upon the heart of every human creature. And herein consists the moral power of the Gospel, and its peculiar adaptedness to melt down the heart of sinners into penitence and submission.

Allow me to illustrate this idea still farther by re-

ferring to an historical event which will tend to throw some new light upon the subject of vicarious suffering.

You are all probably familiar with the incident to which I refer, which occurred among the Locrians, one of the most ancient people of Greece. Their king, in order to place additional safeguards around the chastity, virtue, and happiness of his subjects, caused a law to be passed in relation to the crime of adultery, enforced by high penal sanctions. By the very terms of this law, no one could be guilty of this crime in his kingdom, without subjecting himself to the awful penalty of having his eyes torn out.

This was a good law. By placing additional safeguards around the sanctuary of the domestic circle, it was calculated to secure the peace, and promote the happiness and welfare of every family in the kingdom. This law is enacted. It is proclaimed through the realm. Surely, for a short time, it will make the debauchee and the odious seducer stand abashed! But no—the law has been broken—the transgressor is the king's own son. The crime is clearly proved against him. What now will be done? The eyes of the whole nation are upon the king! Will he respect his own laws? There are many powerful inducements to cause the father to relent. It is his own child that is to suffer this terrible penalty! Upon this child he has built high expectations. To him he has looked for a successor. It is his only son! Shall a father's hand quench the light of those bright eyes, and fix upon his son a mark of eternal infamy? It is indeed hard.

But yet, on the other hand, the crime committed is heinous. The law which forbids it is good, and the

penalty just. It is essential to the well-being and happiness of the nation, that this law should be strictly adhered to. A dispensation from the penalty cannot be granted in this case, without making the law for ever null and void.

How shall the father decide? The guilty son is summoned before him. The executioners stand by, waiting to commence their bloody work. However much that father's feelings inclined him to pardon his child, the claims of justice bid him not relent. That child, who stood trembling before him, was guilty. He deserved the punishment in its full measure, Unless it was inflicted, all obedience would be destroyed.

The signal was, therefore, given to the executioners to proceed—with this restriction, however, that when they had torn out one of his eyes, they should desist; and then he would lie down in his son's place, and allow them to put out one of his eyes, and thus divide the penalty between himself and his child.

Now, I ask, what impression must have been made upon the minds of the Locrians, who stood by, and heard this sentence, and witnessed this scene? Did not this transaction strengthen the authority of that king? Did it not speak with a voice of thunder to all his subjects, that they could not break this law with impunity? And what effect must it have produced upon the heart of that son? Could he have failed to have been deeply affected in witnessing the sternness of justice, and the extent and depth of a father's love, in consenting to suffer in his place?

Like that guilty son, all of our race have broken God's just, and good, and holy law. The penalty of



the divine law must be inflicted. Every sinner merits the whole amount of the wrath and wo it threatens. But lo! while the drawn and glittering sword of divine justice is lifted up and just ready to fall upon our guilty heads, the Son of God comes forward and offers to receive the dreadful blow in his own person. He offers to suffer in our place, the just for the unjust. Unlike the Locrian king, he offers to take not a part, but the whole penalty from us. He is moved to this, however, not from any conception that it would be unjust for us to suffer the penalty, but solely from motives of compassion.

The king of the Locrians did not suffer one of his own eyes to be put out instead of that of his son's, because he supposed that his son did not deserve to have both of his eyes torn from their sockets. He did deserve this. The father knew it; but such feelings of compassion were waked up in his bosom towards his son, that he was willing to suffer in his place. And in like manner Christ knows that every sinner deserves endless death, and that it would be perfectly right in God to pour upon him wrath unto the uttermost. Yet rather than that the sinner should go down to the pit, he is willing to yield up his life in his place.

Well may we say, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" Let men and angels gaze upon the scene that is transacted on the summit of Calvary, and they will receive an impression that will fill them with adoring wonder and awe! As they fix their eye on that scene, they may obtain a clearer view of the terrible nature of sin—of its exceeding sinfulness, and its ill desert,—than they could were they to traverse through the regions

of wo, and survey the deep and burning caverns of perdition. Then, “*Behold the Lamb of God !*”

3. Again, I remark, that the sacrifice of Christ shows God’s abhorrence of sin. In the Redeemer’s sufferings and death, we can see something of the demerit and hatefulness of sin. God’s abhorrence of sin must, in all cases, be proportioned to his love of goodness : and as his love of goodness is infinite, his abhorrence of sin must be infinite. Sin is calculated to effect an infinite evil. Its direct tendency is to subvert that government, which is designed to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of his creatures. Ought He not then to abhor it ?

It may not be improper, in this connection, to observe, that nothing like impulsive rage, spite, or revenge, can ever find a place in the bosom of the glorious Jehovah. He views sin with calm, fixed, passionless, yet with *dreadful* abhorrence. As long as he is a benevolent Being he must hate sin. And in the death of Christ, what a solemn and affecting evidence we have that he does abhor sin !

And here again allow me to recur to the case of the King of the Locrians : If there ever could have occurred an instance in which he could have excused the breach of that law, which he had caused to be enacted and enforced with such tremendous sanctions ; if there ever could exist circumstances under which he would have been inclined to have overlooked its violation : it would have been when his son was the offender. So, when the sins of our race were laid upon Christ, the Son of God, if there ever could be an instance where Jehovah could look upon sin with

any allowance, and not empty upon the transgressor the full weight of his wrath, this surely was that instance. But how was it? Behold Jesus under the weight of this burden in the garden of Gethsemane! See him stretched on the ground in agony! Behold those crimson drops rolling from his sacred forehead! Behold him on the cross! The Heavens grow dark! The rocks rend—the graves open—the earth quakes, and he cries out in anguish unutterable, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Oh, how terrible is the wrath of God! And when our sins were laid upon his son, he did not spare that son in the least. He had to tread the wine-press of Almighty wrath alone! Behold him with his vesture dipped in blood! Listen to his dying groans! See him expiring in agony! See his tears, and sweat, and blood; and then you can form some faint conception of God’s dreadful abhorrence of sin.

And, my dear hearer, if you are still unconverted, remember that you are covered all over with sin. Your whole soul is spotted with those sins which God abhors! Have you not reason to be alarmed? Oh, what will be your doom in the hands of an angry God? Fools make a mock at sin! But can you look upon the cross, and there see in such distinct and awful colours God’s terrible abhorrence of sin, and then think *it* is a light and trifling matter! You may seek to turn away your eye from this appalling truth now, but it will haunt you like a spectre in that lonely hour when your feet begin to tread down the sides of the dark valley! You will then feel, *that to have offended, and broken the law* of the holy and ever-living

God, is no trifling matter. Perhaps you begin to feel this now, and are groaning under the weight, and bitter remembrance of ten thousand unforgiven sins; and the great anxiety of your soul is to know how you may be pardoned. If so, I have a message for you to-night. Look up to the cross, "Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

4. This leads me to remark again that the atoning sacrifice of Christ strikingly exhibits the *mercy of God*. "The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The immaculate Jesus "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." No transaction recorded in the annals of eternity, the knowledge of which has travelled down to our earth, presents such overwhelming demonstrations of the mercy, the love, and compassion of the great and infinite God, as *the death of his Son!* "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What love—what boundless love is here! The great and glorious Jehovah has done everything to melt down human obduracy, and win man's affections: and the sinner's heart must be harder than adamant, that does not soften and relent under such an announcement, "God so loved," &c. Contemplate this stupendous display of divine compassion just for one moment.

Rather than permit us, who had rebelled against him, and rendered ourselves deserving of his infinite



displeasure—rather than permit us vile, guilty worms of the dust to perish, God proposed to have his Son die in our place. That blessed Son was ready to undertake the work. Freely did he offer his body as the victim on which were to be laid all our transgressions. Freely did he consent to drink the cup of death in our stead. Cheerfully “did he suffer, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” To all, therefore, who will return with penitence, and submission, and faith, to the feet of their heavenly Father, the benefits of Christ’s atonement will be so applied, that their sins will all be blotted out, and they renewed in the divine image, and enrolled among the washed and purified children of the Most High. Such will be “justified freely, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” “Their sins and iniquities will be remembered no more.” They will be no longer under condemnation; they will have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

God having set forth his son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, and having thereby declared his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, can now “be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Thus we see that He has rendered it possible, and perfectly consistent with the other attributes of his character, to extend mercy to the penitent and believing sinner. Every human creature who will throw down the weapons of his rebellion, and call upon God for mercy through the atoning sacrifice of the Redeemer, may immediately cherish the hope that his sins are taken away,—“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

There are several important practical inferences to be deduced from the doctrinal truth that we have been exhibiting, which will form the basis of the next discourse, to be delivered, if God permits, next Sunday evening.

We have, for several Sunday evenings, been endeavouring to convince our unconverted hearers that they are very sinful in the sight of a holy God. We have shown them, from the testimony of God's word, that all sin merits eternal death ; that the Almighty himself has decreed that endless destruction shall be the doom of the violators of his law. It has, therefore, been demonstrated that they must perish for ever, unless divine mercy interpose and rescue them by an expedient unknown to the law. In the present discourse we have endeavoured to bring out distinctly to view this expedient, devised by God himself for the salvation of sinners.

The great question, then, which I have to press on you, my unconverted hearer, is : Will you avail yourself of this expedient ? " Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Until you behold the Lamb of God with an eye of faith, your sins cannot be forgiven : they will remain registered in the book of God's everlasting remembrance. They will appear against you in the great day, and close the door of heaven upon you. They will bring down upon your lost and guilty soul all the maledictions of a broken law.

Let me then say to you now, " Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin," &c. He can take

away all sin—even the sin of a world. He can procure pardon for the vilest of sinners. There is no case so desperate that he cannot bring relief to it. He is ready to take away your sins: he is ready to seal your pardon, and write your name in the book of the living. And will you not have your sins taken away?

You cannot, unless you turn from your sins, and humble yourself before God. You cannot, unless you go to the foot of the cross as a lost and perishing sinner, confess that you deserve death, and implore pardon and life through the blood of the *Lamb*. “Behold (held up before you) the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” If you perish, then, in view of the dying Lamb of God, the guilt will be all your own. If you will live and die in your sins—if you will go to the judgment bar unpardoned, know that all the blame rests upon you. You perish because you despise: because you will not avail yourself of the rich provisions which God has made for your salvation.

“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” Oh, what dreadful insult is it to Christ, to refuse to have him for your Saviour: to refuse to be washed in his blood: to refuse to allow him to take away your sins. This is the guilt of every unconverted man. I do not wonder that we read that the unconverted and finally impenitent will “say to the mountains and rocks, *Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*; for the day of his wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand?” That, indeed, will be a day of wrath to unconverted sinners, who have

have despised and refused the riches of redeeming mercy ; and how will they be able to stand ? Oh, unconverted man, how will you be able to stand ? Do not attempt to meet the burning wrath of Jehovah, but now while you may behold the Lamb of God, go to him that is able to take away your sins, and be everlastingly saved !



## DISCOURSE IX.

IF CHRIST BE REJECTED, THERE CAN BE NO SALVATION.

“There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

HEB. x. 26.

THE sacrifice here referred to is the one to which we directed your attention last Sunday evening—“*The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*”

It was then shown that this sacrifice was all-sufficient, that it satisfied the claims of justice, vindicated the insulted authority of God, averted the curse of a broken law, brought in everlasting righteousness, and rendered it possible for “God to be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”

Christ wrought out for his people, by his obedience and sufferings, a *finished salvation*. His blood cleanseth from all sin, and in his righteousness believing souls can be presented at last faultless before the throne. Hence it is evident that we are “complete in him.” There is nothing necessary for the everlasting salvation of a dying sinner, but to look at the cross, to “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” Let any sinner on this globe go and lay the

hand of faith on this great sacrifice, and all his sins shall be taken away. God will remember them no more : he will blot them for ever out of the book of his remembrance.

But if this sacrifice is rejected, there is no other. If men will not, with the eye of faith, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." If men refuse Christ, and go away from him who alone "hath the words of eternal life," to whom can they go ? "There is salvation in no other. There is no other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved."

It has been shown in the preceding discourse that God, in setting forth his son as a sacrifice for sin, hath made the most ample provision for removing human guilt, breaking the iron fetters of sin, recalling the wanderer to the path of obedience, and fitting him for divine and heavenly bliss. In that discourse there was presented the doctrinal truth of the atonement, and several of its obvious moral uses. And it was then intimated that several practical inferences remained to be deduced, which would form the basis of the present discourse.

1. The first practical observation that I would here offer, suggested by contemplating the atoning and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, is the exceeding folly of all those who neglect to embrace the remedy here provided. One principal thing which keeps impenitent and unconverted men back from the cross, is their pride—an unwillingness to look into their spiritual state, and know exactly how the matter stands be-

tween them and God. It is under this particular aspect of the case that I wish here to point out the folly of those who neglect to embrace the great remedy found in the atoning blood of Jesus.

There are hundreds that visit the sanctuary of God, that have a fearful apprehension that all is not right between them and their Maker, who yet never sat down seriously to examine how desperate their case is. When they look up and behold the Lamb of God on the cross, they see that sin must be awfully offensive to the Most High. They know that they are sinners, but they dare not look within, to become acquainted with the full extent of their sinfulness. Such a course is most unwise. Even in worldly affairs a course of procedure like this is sure to lead to ruin. A striking instance, illustrative of the truth of this remark, is now present to my recollection.

Many years since, in a large and flourishing village that stood on the banks of one of the beautiful western lakes, resided a merchant of high standing, and great influence. He had been one of the early settlers in that western world, and was supposed to possess immense wealth. His property had been acquired by persevering toil, and unwearied industry. And still, though to all appearance he was rolling in affluence, he rose early, and sat up late, and toiled incessantly to amass earthly treasure. As I have already remarked, this man was reputed to be immensely wealthy. As his pecuniary means increased, he extended his business. This circumstance, although it was ultimately the cause of his ruin, at the time increased public confidence: for it was supposed that one so prudent and calculating as he,

would run no risk, nor engage in any Quixotic enterprise.

So high did he stand in the public esteem, as a man of wealth, and incorruptible probity, that the more prudent farmers around him, who had small sums of money to loan—widows who had just a little pittance left them on which to subsist, and many of the labouring class of people, who, by their industry and economy, had laid aside a little for a day of future want, instead of depositing their money in the bank, or investing it in stock, put it into his hands as a place beyond the reach of accident. Vast sums of money had thus been committed to him in trust.

But all this time he was a bankrupt! No one knew it but himself, and he would not permit himself to think of it for a single moment. It was a painful subject, and he kept it constantly in abeyance.

Though causes were at work which must infallibly disclose the fatal secret, and wrest from him all his possessions, he would never suffer himself to dwell upon this thought a moment. He kept on, calmly prosecuting his plans, but steadily averting his eye from events, which he knew must inevitably involve him in irrecoverable disaster. Had he looked the danger in the face, and been willing to have surrendered his property at an earlier period, he might have avoided a final shipwreck. But from the commencement, the subject was a painful one, and he instinctively shrunk from examining it. His wish was to put off as far as possible the evil day, hoping that some happy occurrence in the mean time might extricate him from the embarrassment in which he was involved. But this was absolutely hoping against



hope. Every movement he made, involved him deeper in difficulty.

The widow and the fatherless still came to him to deposit their little all in his hands. Though conscience stung him, he had not moral courage, or moral honesty enough to tell them, *to keep their money, for they were casting it into a great maelstrom*, which would swallow it all up, and they would never see it more.

The evil day at length came! His house fell, and great was the fall of it! Himself and hundreds of others were crushed beneath its ruins: and all this because he was not willing to meet the difficulty in its incipient stages—before it was for ever to late.

The unconverted sinner is acting just such a part. *He* is a bankrupt. He owes an immense debt to Jehovah, and has nothing to pay. God is calling him to a settlement, but he turns away and utterly refuses to look at the state of his affairs. Though he knows things are now very bad, and are growing worse, and worse every hour, yet he turns away his thoughts from the subject, and fixes them upon something else. Like that conscious bankrupt, he putsoff the evil day! But the evil day will come, and then he will find himself ruined for ever.

The great folly of this conduct consists in men's neglecting or rejecting the only remedy that can bring relief to their case.

The unconverted sinner has contracted immense debts, and he has nothing to pay. How can he stand before his Great Creditor, who will exact of him the whole amount, and if he cannot meet the demand, will shut him up in the dark prison-house of despair until he has paid the uttermost farthing?

Is it not wise for my unconverted hearer to consider this question? Surely it is not wise to push this question out of sight! It is better to meet it now, than when you stand arraigned at the judgment! Can you answer for one of a thousand of your sins? Can you go to the judgment bar, and render up there such a reason as will satisfy God, and secure your acquittal? If God be strict to mark what is done amiss—if he will by no means clear the guilty, unconverted friend, is not your case a desperate one? For one moment, consider the number, and enormity, and aggravations of your sins—how ungrateful you have been!—what insult you have offered to Jehovah, and how remorselessly you have trampled upon his law! What will you do? You deserve to die. Justice demands your blood! The penalty of the violated law hangs over you. Oh, sinner, how will you escape? There is one way—one door of escape—“Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But if you will not lay hold of this hope set before you—if you will not look into your own heart, and see how desperate your case is, and fly to the cross for refuge, if you neglect, or turn away from this great atoning sacrifice; then your ruin is inevitable—“there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

2. And this leads me to remark, *Secondly*, upon the folly of those who find in the sacrifice of Christ a reason for delaying their repentance—who convert this highest display of divine mercy into a fatal rock, on which to wreck their never-dying souls.

God having enacted a holy law, enforced it with a tremendous penalty. That law was broken, and the

penalty incurred. But, instead of inflicting the threatened punishment—instead of allowing the sinner to abide by the consequences of his sin—instead of sending down the whole race into the regions of wo and darkness—the Eternal One devised an expedient by which every soul of man could be saved.

Now the effect of this divine interposition upon some hearts, has been to harden them still more in sin—to confirm them in the opinion that it would not have been right in God to have punished them with endless death; and also to inspire them with the secret hope that, live or die as they may, God will contrive some way, in consistency with his own honour, to rescue them from endless ruin. The very circumstance that God gave his own son as a ransom for sinners, instead of melting down their hard and impenitent hearts, and leading them to an immediate return to the feet of their injured and insulted heavenly Father, has only tended to strengthen them in the belief that God's mercy is so great, that he will save them in some way or other at last. This display of divine mercy makes them *presume* upon God's mercy, and leads them secretly to conclude that even if they do not repent, and are not converted, He will find out some way to save them from going down to hell. This is one of the most subtle delusions of the devil: and I have no doubt that if the feelings of unconverted men were analyzed and laid open, it would be found that there were many cherishing this secret hope, and, by means of it, resisting all the appeals which can be made to them. Let me say, however, it is a hope that will perish and vanish away like smoke in the day when God riseth up to judgment.

There is no salvation for sinners, without the remission of sins ; and there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood. The only blood that can take away sins is the blood of the Lamb. If men reject this, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” But all impenitent and unconverted men refuse to “behold,” with the eye of faith, “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” They refuse to go to Christ, and embrace him as their Saviour. They virtually reject his atonement. They do not rest their souls on it. They are seeking for themselves some other ground of acceptance. But the text declares that they who reject the sacrifice of Christ have nothing else to look to—that there is no other blood to wash away their sins—no other means of pardon—no other expedient of deliverance. All that such have to expect, is a “*certain, fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.*”

This is the decision of God himself—if men will not be converted, and embrace the Saviour, as God is true, they will perish for ever ! This is the very inference which we are constrained to draw from contemplating Christ on the cross.

As you turn your eye to Calvary, and behold there that scene of agony and death, you can form some faint idea of what will be the transgressor’s punishment through the wasteless ages of eternity !

If God did not spare his own Son when the sinner’s sins were laid on him, will He spare *that sinner*, if he still continues impenitent and rebellious—still refuses to submit to Jehovah ? If it was not consistent with the glory, and integrity, and immutable principles of



the divine government, to pardon sin without exhibiting such an expression of the divine displeasure and utter abhorrence of it, as was witnessed in the ignominious and painful death of Jesus Christ, can it be supposed that God will ever pass an act of pardon upon any human transgressor, as long as he refuses to embrace this atoning sacrifice by an act of humble and heartfelt submission to God?

How does such a supposition degrade the character and tarnish the brightness of the mediatorial work of Christ!—as though the pure and holy Jesus, by his sacrificial death, had procured a sort of general jail-delivery—had provided for the unhumbled and unsubdued transgressor the right and privilege of disobedience!—a sort of plenary indulgence!—a general permit to go and sin to the utmost with impunity!

Turn your eye to Calvary, and you will read another truth written there in awful characters. Behold the sacrifice that is lifted up there, and you will see that you must renounce your rebellion, or sink down under the weight of everlasting wrath.

Never! never, till you have made the word of God false—never! never, till you have overturned the whole empire of God, can you press your way into heaven, impenitent and unpardoned. You must be born again, or lie down in everlasting sorrow. There is no other way to the gates of the celestial paradise, but that new and living way which has been opened and consecrated by the blood of Jesus. If you will not walk in this way, where God and Christ is you can never come!

3. A third practical remark which I would here

offer is, that the atonement of Christ takes away all excuse from the sinner.

The Saviour remarks, in relation to those around him, who continued impenitent and unbelieving: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." He is speaking particularly here of their rejecting him as a Saviour and a sacrifice for sin.

With truth may it be said of all to whom the gospel is preached, "they have no cloak for their sin." If men do not repent, and turn to God, and embrace the offers of life, they are utterly without excuse.

In the act of redemption, the most ample provision was made for all the sons and daughters of the human race. The Lamb of God taketh away the *sin of the world*. Christ "tasted death for every man." Salvation is brought within the reach of every human creature. There is no hard or difficult service demanded at our hand. We are not required "to do some great thing." We are not commanded to go on a long and painful pilgrimage. We are not required to pass through a fiery ordeal of self-imposed suffering, and the rigours of corporeal penance. We are only to look to the cross, as the Jews did to the brazen serpent, and we shall be healed. We have only to behold, with an eye of penitence and faith, the hand of God, and our sins will all be taken away. We have only to walk by the Saviour's side, and copy his example, and allow him to spread over us

the stainless robe of his righteousness, and God will look upon us with everlasting favour. Oh ! is not the yoke easy, and the burden light ?

What excuse can the sinner have ? *The number or enormity of any man's sins* will not stand in the way of sharing in the riches of free grace : there is an infinite fullness in Christ. That we have sinned ever so much, ever so heinously, ever so long, is no barrier in the way of pardon ; because “ the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all sin*.” In that fountain, open for sin and uncleanness, the very chief of sinners may wash and be clean. Even the murderers and bloody persecutors of the Son of God can be pardoned through his atoning sacrifice. “ Though your sins be as scarlet, they can here be made white as snow ; and though they be red, like crimson, they can here be made as wool.”

Unconverted sinner, then, why do you delay ? Look up to the cross ! Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. He is ready to take away all thy sins. This is the only place to which thou canst fly for refuge. There is no other door of escape. “ There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” The cross—the cross is thy only hope ! Behold the Lamb of God ! Look upon him now as thy Saviour, and, from this moment, give him thy whole heart. Renounce all other dependence. What is your own righteousness but a broken reed ? what is it but filthy rags, which will only expose your nakedness, and make you ashamed in the day of God ? Shrink not from self-inspection. God sees you, and knows the full extent of your guilt. Be willing to see yourself in the light in which He views

you. Look at the long list of sins that are written down on the pages of memory. Do not shut your eyes upon them; you will have to look at them one day! Oh! how will they appear, when you stand at His tribunal!—when the light that cannot be shut out will be thrown in upon the memory and conscience, and each transgression shall come forth from its secret slumbering place, as a witness against you! In that hour, there will be “no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully and with tears.” In that hour, there will be held up before you no Lamb of God to take away your sins”—“there will then remain no more sacrifice for sins, but a *certain* fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

Contemplate, then, now, I entreat you, your sins, and look to Calvary for deliverance. *There* you will behold a sacrifice all-sufficient; and it is the only sacrifice that will avail. *There*, in that meek and dying Lamb of God, fellow sinner, is your only hope. There is salvation in none other. He must *take away* your sins, or you will feel their intolerable weight through eternity! He is able to *take off* the burden, and to cleanse your guilt. He is able to save, unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. He is ready and willing to receive you.

“From the cross, uplifted high,  
Where the Saviour deigns to die,  
What melodious sounds I hear,  
Bursting on my ravished ear!  
Love’s redeeming work is done,  
Come, and welcome, sinner, come.”

Yea, from the cross of Calvary, even now, a voice of heavenly invitation reaches your ear: it is the



voice of the Son of God, addressed to you, saying, "Come, now, let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; and though they be red, like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Trembling, mourning sinner! look up, and behold the cross of Christ! On that cross your pardon is written in letters of blood! Only embrace this sacrifice by faith, only fix a believing eye on the Lamb of God, and your sins will be blotted out this moment. Only fix your believing regards on the crucified Redeemer, and look up to the cross with a simple reliance on his blood, and with the feeling of the publican when he cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and, even while I speak, God's truth is pledged that your transgressions shall be removed as far from you as the east is from the west.

Embrace this sacrifice *now*. Behold the Lamb of God *now*. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *now*. For now God invites—now the sacrifice bleeds—now the Spirit whispers, "*sinner, come.*"

Oh! look, and live. Wait not another moment. There is balm in Gilead, and a physician there:—balm to heal all your wounds—medicine to cure all your sickness. You can never make yourself better; you must come to this physician, or die. Every moment you delay, you are growing worse—your disease is becoming more inveterate and incurable.

Wait for no qualifications. You can never make yourself any holier, till you come to Christ. Every moment you delay, you are becoming more guilty and polluted. You can do nothing but fall down in despair

at the feet of God, and looking at the bleeding Lamb, cry, "Lord, save, or I perish."

If you will thus fix an eye of faith on the bleeding Saviour, your sins shall be quickly blotted out. "Believe the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Christ himself invites you: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will *give you rest*."—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out."—"The Spirit and the bride say *come*; and let him that heareth say *come*: and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

After such invitations, what sinner on this earth can urge any excuse for not going immediately to the feet of the Saviour? Unconverted hearer, what is your decision? Will you have this Christ, or no?

"Once more we ask you, in his name,  
For yet his love remains the same,  
Say, will you to Mount Zion go?  
Say, will you have this Christ, or no?"

4. This leads me to remark again, that the guilt of the finally impenitent will be inconceivably aggravated, by the neglected and rejected atonement of Christ. I can conceive of no act that could augment the guilt, and enhance the condemnation of a sinner so fearfully as a voluntary continuance in sin, after all that has been done for his rescue and redemption by the

great God of Heaven. As we have already seen, there is now no excuse. The way is entirely open. The sinner has only to lay the hand of faith on the great sacrifice, and his salvation is secured. “Who-soever believeth on him shall not come into condemnation.”

How could the Eternal One have appealed to us more tenderly? Now could he have placed before us stronger or more constraining motives? He has given his Son to die for us!!! Our situation is one full of peril. We are standing on the brink of ruin, hanging by a single hair over the deep gulf of perdition. Christ comes and offers to deliver us; to rescue us from danger, and to bear the punishment that is due to our sins! *Now*, if we refuse this offer, how certain, how inevitable will be our destruction! “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” To them who neglect, or reject the salvation procured by the Son of God, “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation.”

If God spared not his own Son, when he stood in the place of the sinner, will he spare the sinner who goes on in rebellion, and appears even at the judgment bar unsubdued? No! The trampled blood of Christ will rise up at that judgment bar to overwhelm him with condemnation. Oh, the guilt of having despised and rejected the salvation that was earned with the sweat, and tears, and toil, and blood of God’s own Son! Who can conceive its extent? Who will escape that neglects this great salvation?

“The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and

will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence: Yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

Unconverted hearer, this is the God whom you have to meet, and before whom you refuse to bow!! Oh, will you not accept the pardon so freely tendered you? Will you not accept it now?

Perhaps I am addressing some unconverted persons who have turned away from the only sacrifice for many years: have grown old and grey-headed in impenitence, and are here to-night, unconverted, and in their sins! My dear friends, do you think you have any time to lose? There is but a hand's breadth between you and the grave, and here you are in your sins: while the sacrifice of Christ is still neglected and rejected! Oh, if you would meet God in peace; if you would go down to your graves in hope, delay not another moment; reach forth the hand of faith, and lay it on the head of your Redeemer; for, be well assured, that there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins.

Are there not many unconverted persons here this evening, who have been attending this series of discourses? And among these, are there not some, who feel anxious about their salvation? Although I purpose to address you in one or two additional discourses



es, allow me to address a single word of counsel to you now, who have been led to feel under the hearing of the truth. Put yourselves in the way of cherishing and retaining the good impressions that have been made by conversing with your pastor, by examining your own heart, by reading the Scriptures, by retirement and prayer, and, above all, by casting yourselves at once on the arm of your Saviour. May God Almighty give you grace to do so.

## DISCOURSE X.

### THE FREENESS OF THE GOSPEL SALVATION.

“ And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

REV. XXII. 17.

THE history of the world proves that “ *The Lord reigns.*” Events do not happen here by chance. There is an unseen hand that guides, and overrules all. The Saviour “ *knows his sheep.*” He knows who are striving to serve and please him. Though temporal calamities sometimes gather thick around them, he beholds them with sympathetic eye and parental tenderness ; and so orders things that their very sufferings will ultimately contribute, not only to their own spiritual well-being, *but to his glory*, and the good of the human race.

There is great point and truth in the remark, that “ the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” Every persecution that has come upon the Church, since the holy and heavenly minded Stephen fell beneath the murderous hands of his countrymen, has only tended to roll on with increased speed, the wheels of the Redeemer’s chariot.

The act of the Roman Emperor, who banished "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*" to the ocean rock of the Cyclades, was, under God, the means of contributing to the increase of that heavenly light, which had begun to dawn upon a darkened world. While banished to that lone isle, and sentenced to labor in the mines, there was revealed to him such a view of heaven, and the glories of the upper world, as not only bore him up under all his trials, but has ministered comfort to thousands, who in each successive age have been pressing on to join the innumerable company that stand before the throne! No preceding writer had given such bright and vivid sketches of the employment, and worship, and scenery of heaven. While we look at these sketches, we seem almost to see the river of life rolling along beneath the ambrosial trees that stand on its bank, and to hear the tread of that "great multitude, which no man can number," as they advance, clothed in white, with victor-palms in their hands, and lift up their voice, saying, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

By means of this wonderful vision, which the Spirit of the living God spread before the astonished eye of this disciple, we seem to get a nearer and more profound view of that heavenly world, where all is pure, and bright, and serene, and cloudless, and where sin never fixed one dark stain of defilement. On the summit of the heavenly mount is the throne of God, and the Lamb, and around it ten thousand golden harps of undying melody. But the heaven which the Revelation of St. John opens to our view, is a holy heaven. Every part of it is full of the holy presence of God and

Christ. "The choral anthem of the skies," is the song which has for its burden the *atonement blood of Christ*. And as the apocalyptic vision opens to us a view of the redeemed in heaven, where Christ is all and in all, so in the more didactic parts of the book which contains this vision, Christ is exhibited as the only way by which sinners can reach that glorious heaven.

The verse from which our text is taken declares the infinite freeness and fulness of the salvation which is in Christ. This salvation is here metaphorically denominated "*The water of life*." The unqualified assertion is made, that whosoever will, may come and take of this freely. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The question here very naturally arises, *how* shall a sinner TAKE of this water of life? *What shall he do?*

I am led to believe that the discussion of this question will be listened to with interest, from the fact that I know that there are some, and I hope their number is not a few, now in the congregation, who are deeply anxious "to know what they must do to be saved."

Will not a prayer, like a cloud of incense, go up from many hearts in this congregation *then*, while I try to point out the difficulties in the sinner's way to God, and show him how he may overcome them? Oh, let me speak to-night, with the cloud of God's presence resting on my head. Let me stand under the outstretched wings of the Holy Spirit, and lift up my voice to tell sinners how to go to Christ. And may the Eternal Spirit take of the things of Christ and show them unto them. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."



Before I proceed to a particular exposition of the text, I would remark, that we must understand "*this water of life*," this eternal salvation which we need, to be *in Christ, and nowhere else*. In our last two discourses, we showed that Christ was "The Lamb of God, appointed to take away the sin of the world," and that there was no other sacrifice; that if we rejected or neglected him, we should be undone for ever. To take of the water of life, therefore, is to go to Christ, and to receive salvation at his hands.

Now to illustrate this idea, suppose that a person of great distinction, wealth, influence and power, were to come to this country, and we desired to enjoy his friendship, and obtain from him a distinguished favour. How would we set ourselves about accomplishing this object? Would we not seek an early opportunity to be introduced to him? Would we not seize upon the earliest occasion to signify to him our wishes?

Supposing that previous to any personal acquaintance with us he had sent us a most kind and condescending message, assuring us that he is ready to grant all that we desired, provided we would visit him, and become truly his friends, and undertake to support his interests. Would not our course be a very plain and simple one? Should we not immediately repair to his presence? Should we not freely tender him every assurance of our regard and unwavering attachment?

The humbled sinner, who desires to be saved—desires to have his sins blotted out, and to enjoy the favour and friendship of Christ, has only to pursue the same course. A message has come to him from

Christ, assuring him of His willingness to save him, and confer upon him everlasting blessedness. “Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” And to go to Christ, we have not to travel to some distant part of the country. We may just go into the next room and find him there; nay, we may be in the field, or by the wayside, or in the engagements of our business, and Christ is just by our side: and “Whosoever shall call on his name shall be saved.”

This whole business of “*taking the water of life*,” of obtaining salvation, is one of the simplest things in the world. It is just giving the heart to Christ—taking him for our governor and guide, and setting out in a new and heavenly course.

I am aware, that many hesitate, and stumble here. They seem to think there is some great obstacle in the way, and they do not know what it is, or how to remove it. There is undoubtedly often an obstacle, but that obstacle is altogether in ourselves. This is the particular point which I shall endeavour to exhibit this evening. If we understand what the obstacle is, and see that it is in ourselves, we shall then be prepared to overcome it.

“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Many persons have exceedingly confused notions in reference to the sinner’s inability to turn to God. With a view to exalt the sovereignty of Jehovah, and preserve in its integrity the doctrine that the sinner’s conversion is the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit, views are sometimes advanced which seem to imply that sinners may be desirous to become

holy, and be willing to submit to God, and yet perish in their sins.

Unconverted men, "whom the God of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them," are often very glad to find a theological covert of this kind under which to shelter themselves, and to sit down in quiet in their sins.

It may be well asked, if a man can be truly willing to be saved, and desirous to become holy, and yet fail in all his applications to a throne of grace, if he can do nothing but sit still and wait till God, by an act of sovereignty, regenerates his heart; of what use are any efforts to turn to God? The moment a man becomes convinced that this is his situation, his conscience is at rest. He does not feel condemned for not doing what he cannot do. He makes up his mind to sit still. He will not try to repent, or turn from any sin. He regards himself as an unfortunate, rather than a guilty being, and in his heart thinks it would be an act of infinite tyranny in Jehovah to cast him down to hell.

Now, from the doctrine of the text, it is clearly demonstrated that this whole scheme is utterly false. It is altogether a "*refuge of lies*," which will vanish away like smoke when the light of eternity breaks in upon the soul. The word of God everywhere declares that there is no obstacle in the sinner's path except his own unwillingness to submit to God. God is ready to be reconciled to him. Christ died for the very purpose of bringing the sinner back to God. The Holy Spirit is constantly striving with the sinner to prevail upon him to yield, and return to the Lord

that he may have mercy upon him, but the sinner himself is unwilling.

No one that reflects—no one that has any acquaintance with the astonishing scheme of mercy revealed in the Gospel, can for a moment suppose that there is any unwillingness on the part of God to receive any sinner who is willing to be reconciled, and desirous to return to him. The very supposition is a libel upon the character of Jehovah, and in direct contradiction to his own express declaration—“As I live, saith the Lord, *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, but that the wicked should turn and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” Christ lays the fault of impenitent men’s not being saved at their own door—“Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.”

Placed under the light of the Gospel, and visited by the influences and strivings of the Holy Spirit, there is no inability in any human creature which can be the slightest excuse for his neglecting for a single hour his salvation. Salvation has been prepared for him: God is waiting to be gracious: all things are ready. There is nothing that keeps him back from Christ, and pardon, and everlasting life, but his own obstinate, unsubdued will! If he were only willing to be saved, and to be saved in God’s way, his sins would be instantly remitted and he “*set in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*”

This is the express testimony of that portion of the divine word which stands in immediate connection with the text. “The spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”



*Observe, First :* The *Spirit bids* the dying sinner come to the waters of life. The Spirit to which reference is made is the *Holy Spirit*, which dictated the Scriptures, and which strives with sinners to turn them to the Lord.

The Holy Scriptures certainly do everywhere invite men to return to the Lord, bearing their unqualified testimony, that if they will do so, he will have mercy upon them, and abundantly pardon them.

The prophets and patriarchs, and all those holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, have borne one concurrent testimony in relation to God's readiness to receive into everlasting favour all those who are willing to return to him with prayer, and penitence, and humble reliance on the blood of Christ. The whole scheme of redeeming mercy unfolded in the Scriptures, rests upon the implied fact that the great point at which Jehovah is aiming in all that he is doing for our earth is to bring its sinful inhabitants into a state of submission to His government. So far from there being any doubt whether God will receive those who return to Him, the very object for which He gave His Son was to lead sinners to return. How absurd then the idea, that any are willing and anxious to do so, and that God is not willing to receive them ! The Spirit breathes this invitation from every page of the sacred Word—" *Come, come to Christ !* Come and give yourself up to the Lord. Every precept—every exhortation in the Bible urges the sinner to this very point. And after all this, can you, my hearer, think that Jehovah is not willing that you should do, what He so repeatedly, and earnestly urges upon you ? The Holy Spirit bids sinners come by a voice within. There is not an individual

before me that has not often heard that “*still small voice*”—that has not often felt the gentle drawings, or powerful strivings of the Spirit of God. I doubt not that there are many before me this evening that feel the hand of the Spirit upon them. They are led to see they are sinners—to feel that their situation is a dangerous one: anxious thoughts begin to arise in their bosom, and already have they formed a purpose that they will pay more attention to the great matter of their salvation. That divine influence which is making your heart tender, and lighting up conscience with a flame, and causing memory to write bitter things against you, is the voice of the Spirit, saying to you—“*Come to the feet of Jesus, and be saved.*”

Why has God reached down His hand and laid it upon you, but to draw you to Himself? Why has He troubled Himself to arouse you from your false security—from your delusive dreams, but to recover you out of the snare of the devil? Every movement of the Spirit upon your heart says—“*come.*” And here I would remark that when men are long weighed down under distress of mind arising from conviction of sin, and find no relief, the real cause of their anguish, and of this protracted mental suffering, is *their unwillingness* to come to a determination to obey God, and to cast themselves upon His mercy in Christ. The Holy Spirit holds up vividly before them arguments and motives to prompt them to relinquish their rebellion, and to enter at once upon the path of unqualified obedience, but this they are not willing to do. Their reluctance—their unwillingness to yield, to submit, to return to that God whom they have offended, is what occasions the struggle and distress in their minds.

*Observe, Second :* That, not only the *Spirit*, but the *Bride* bids the sinner *come*. The *Church*, the Covenanted people of God, all who have been made savingly acquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus, are denominated his spouse, or bride. All these bear one testimony in relation to the fullness and freeness of the salvation that is in Christ. Ask of all who have drank of the water of life, why they did not go at an earlier period to that crystal stream, to slake their burning thirst, and they will tell you that the only reason was, that they were not willing to go—that the moment they were willing to go every obstacle was removed, and they found this heavenly stream as acceptable, and as free as the water of the brook which rolled along at their feet. They will all tell you that the moment they were willing to go to the foot of the cross, and give themselves up to God, light and peace and comfort broke in upon their minds.

The whole Church militant bid you *come*. And the Church triumphant, those glorified spirits, who were once lost, guilty sinners, like yourselves, but who have now escaped from the pollutions of the world, and have entered upon their eternal rest, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, they bid you come and participate in those “*riches of grace*,” that were so freely bestowed on them. As they stand in yonder fields of glory crowned with eternal joys, they invite you to come and share with them in that unspeakable felicity.

*Observe, Third:* That it is enjoined upon every one that heareth, to bid the dying sinner come. “*And let him that heareth say come.*”

It is here made the duty of all who hear or read the gospel, to proclaim the freeness of God's mercy, and his entire willingness to receive returning sinners. The duty of ministers—the duty of Christians—yea, the duty of all who hear the tidings of salvation, is in this clause distinctly pointed out. They are to proclaim to the whole world, to every human creature whom they meet, that the way to the fountain of life is entirely open, and that every one may come and take of its waters freely.

*Fourth :* Again, it is added, “*Let him that is athirst come.*” Let every man throughout the broad earth, who thirsts for salvation—who longs to have his sins forgiven, and his name written in the book of life, come to Christ. If there be in this house a single individual that longs to be saved, and to enjoy an evidence that he is a child of God, this invitation is addressed especially to him. And then, lest any may hesitate, not being able to determine whether their thirst be spiritual or not, the text is added—“*Let whosoever will, or is willing, come and take the water of life freely*”—as freely as he would take water from a well which belonged in common to him and all his neighbours.

You see, therefore, that the doctrine of the text, and the testimony of Scripture is, that, in the path of the sinner's return to God, there is no obstacle but that which exists in his own unwillingness to return.

To shed still more light upon this subject, allow me here to introduce a simple incident, to illustrate the principles which we have endeavoured to exhibit.

A number of years since, during the severity of a



most inclement winter in London, there was a vast deal of suffering among the unsheltered and houseless poor that roamed through that extended city. There was, however, too much Christian benevolence in that great metropolis, to allow these poor sufferers to perish in the street. A refuge was speedily opened for them. Houses were fitted up for their reception, and bills posted at the corners of the streets in different parts of the town, to apprise all whom it might concern of this fact. The bills thus posted, not only announced the fact *that a shelter was provided for the houseless*, but described with great particularity the place where this shelter was to be found, and the streets that led to it.

Now, I have no doubt that these bills were read by some who felt no interest in the information communicated. They had their own comfortable houses, and everything that heart could desire. They felt that they had no concern with this information, and carelessly passed on.

In like manner, are there many that hear the gospel—that hear the way pointed out to Christ—that hear that he is a refuge to which the lost can flee—and yet, they feel no interest in all this intelligence. They are not sensible that they are lost, or that they need a refuge. They therefore turn carelessly away from the most affecting appeals that can be presented to urge sinners to go to Christ.

Again: those bills were unquestionably read by some who, though they needed the shelter that was offered, would not go to any one of these asylums, on account of the restraints which they would expect to meet there. And, in like manner, are there many

who feel wretched in themselves, and who would like to be happy—would like to escape perdition, and enter heaven, who yet will not go to Christ, because they cannot do so without renouncing their sins—crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and becoming new and holy men. They will not come to the waters of life, because they dislike the way that leads to the fountain. The difficulty, therefore, is entirely in themselves.

Again, those bills were probably read by some who, though in absolute want of the proffered charity, were too proud to avail themselves of it.

Just so it is with many who hear the invitations of the gospel. They are, in a degree, convinced of their sinfulness, and at times feel anxious about their souls. But then, when they see what kind of salvation is offered them—that they are to be stripped of all their own righteousness—that they can bring nothing to Christ to purchase salvation with—that they must come to Christ even as the beggar goes to the alms-house—and that they cannot come to him secretly—that they must confess before the world that Saviour, upon whom they cast their souls—their proud hearts rise up in rebellion against these requisitions. They would like to be saved, but not in this way. But as God has revealed only one way that leads to the waters of life—and that is the very way which they so much dislike—they refuse to take of the water of life.

Once more: These bills might have been read by some who doubted whether any such houses were fitted up for the poor; or, if there were, whether *they* could gain admission, if they went. There might

have been those who were in destitution and want, that urged these doubts as an excuse for not repairing to these asylums. But the very doubts themselves showed that these persons were not willing to go.

And just so it is with some who hear the gospel. When the claims of God's law, and the salvation that is in Christ, are pressed directly upon their attention, they endeavour to ward off the appeal, by stating doubts that rise up in their mind about the certainty of these things. All this is said to excuse themselves from giving up themselves immediately to God. If they have any doubts in relation to the truth of the Bible, they should satisfy themselves on that point immediately. They had better neglect everything till this matter is investigated. No worldly pursuit, no human interest, can have a claim upon their attention, in any degree comparable with those eternal things of which the Bible treats. While they are deferring this business, they may die, and go down to the pit, and there they will no longer doubt.

Inquiring sinners are sometimes kept back from Christ by fears or doubts, whether they shall be received. But these doubts arise from a wicked heart of unbelief. They are more ready to believe the suggestions of Satan, than they are the words of Christ. If the houseless vagrant had followed the direction on the posted bill, and not found any shelter to receive him ; or, if he had applied at the door of the asylum, and been refused admittance, then might he with propriety have called in question the truth of the statements contained upon that bill. And if the sinner honestly seeks to save his soul, and that in *the way* the Bible points out, and fails to become transformed

into the image of Christ, then may he with propriety doubt. But there never was such an instance. As God is true, every soul that seeks salvation with honest and persevering efforts, shall obtain it. Whoever goes and knocks at the door of mercy will find admission. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life *freely*."

But there is still another case, which I must suppose before this illustration can be complete. This bill meets the eye of a half-starved, houseless wanderer, who really wishes to find a place of shelter. No sooner is he made acquainted with the fact there communicated, than he exclaims, "This is just what I want, A SHELTER FOR THE HOUSELESS POOR. I have no house, no shelter, no friends. All who have once loved me have gone down to the grave, I have parted with my last farthing, and I just now thought I would lie down in the street here and die. But here is just such provision offered me as I need. It says, "ALL WHO WILL CAN COME WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE ! I will go and seek admission." He follows the direction in the bill. He reaches the asylum, and knocks at its door. No sooner is his errand made known, than he is welcomed to all the comforts of the place.

The Gospel, which directs sinners to Christ, may not improperly be compared to those bills which were posted at the corners of the streets. On one page it says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." On another page is read : "He is able to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto God by him." On a third : "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." On



a fourth: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

A convinced sinner who wants to save his soul reads these declarations, and as he reads, his heart burns within him, and he says: "This is just what I need, I am a sinner, I feel condemned before God. It would be perfectly right in Jehovah to cast me away for ever as an unclean thing—but oh, these tidings! this proclamation of pardon and peace through the blood of Jesus Christ—this offer of justification by grace! It is precisely adapted to my wants; it is exactly suited to my case. It is just the refuge I need. My own heart whispers there is no pardon for one so guilty, but I'll try:

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin  
Hath like a mountain rose;  
I know his courts, I'll enter in  
Whatever may oppose.

Prostrate I'll lie before his throne,  
And there my guilt confess;  
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone,  
Without his sovereign grace.

But should the Lord reject my plea,  
And disregard my prayer;  
Yet still like Esther will I stay,  
And perish only there.

I can but perish if I go:  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know,  
I must for ever die."

Do you think Christ ever rejected a sinner who came to him in this way? No! While the sinner

thus lies prostrate at the feet of Jesus, the Spirit of the Lord will come and breathe upon these dry bones that they may live. Divine grace and comfort will come down upon his soul like the sweet summer shower, or the silent, unseen gentle dew upon the mown grass. While he lies there on his face, prostrate before the mercy seat, he begins to drink from the crystal stream, that issues from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb, and thus becomes another witness for Christ, that "Whosoever will, can come, and take of the water of life freely."

There are several important practical inferences to be deduced from the views now exhibited, which will form the basis of another discourse, the last in this series. But as we shall not deliver that until the first Sunday evening in the next month, we may regard this series of discourses as closed for the present.

And here it seems a proper time to inquire, What has been the result of all this exhibition of truth upon the minds of the unconverted in this congregation?

Message after message has been delivered to you, my unconverted friend, from God himself. While I have been standing here, and trying to exhibit the truth in faithfulness, the people of God have been lifting up their united supplications for a blessing on you. Oh, you will never know till you enter the eternal world, how many earnest, fervent prayers, have been offered to God for your conversion. The prayers that have been offered up have pierced the heavens, and entered the ears of the Lord of hosts. The Holy Spirit has been sent down, and souls have been converted to God. I have heard from the lips of some of my hearers such testimony as I am sure will lead

me to rejoice through all eternity, that I have been permitted to preach this series of sermons. But are there not many that are still unconverted? My dear hearer, who art still unconverted, this is a very affecting moment to me. I can, in some slight degree, conceive now how I shall feel, if I see you at last driven out for ever from the presence of God. I will tell you plainly I am afraid I shall see this one day. I have been seeking for this many weeks, to draw out of the divine treasury, truth, and motives, and arguments, to move and melt your heart; I have borne you on my soul continually before God. Yes, while you have slept, I have awoken, and risen to pour out my heart in supplication before God for you. I have asked the prayers of all God's people for you. I have besought the members of this Church to be very earnest in their prayers to God for you. I have written to the members of the Church, in which I formerly ministered, entreating them to bear you on their hearts in their approaches to the mercy seat. I have written to my brethren in the ministry, and besought them to pray for your conversion. I have held up before you Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I have exhibited to you the strongest motives that can be found in the whole word of God. The Spirit of the Son has been here; and all around you souls have found salvation. God himself has been striving with you; and yet, after all these prayers, and all these appeals, and all these strivings of the Spirit: here you are to-night, still in your sins—an unconverted sinner!! And I tell you the truth, when I say I am afraid that you never will be converted! I am afraid that where God and Christ is you will never come!! Oh, I could sit down and

weep a fountain of tears over you. Here are the waters of life, and you can come to them, but you will not. Ye, who go away from this audience to-night unconverted, I am afraid I shall never meet you in glory. Oh, why will ye die? It is not now too late. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. If you have listened to all these discourses unmoved, may God, in his infinite mercy to-night, strike conviction into your soul, and pluck you as a brand from the *Burning*!



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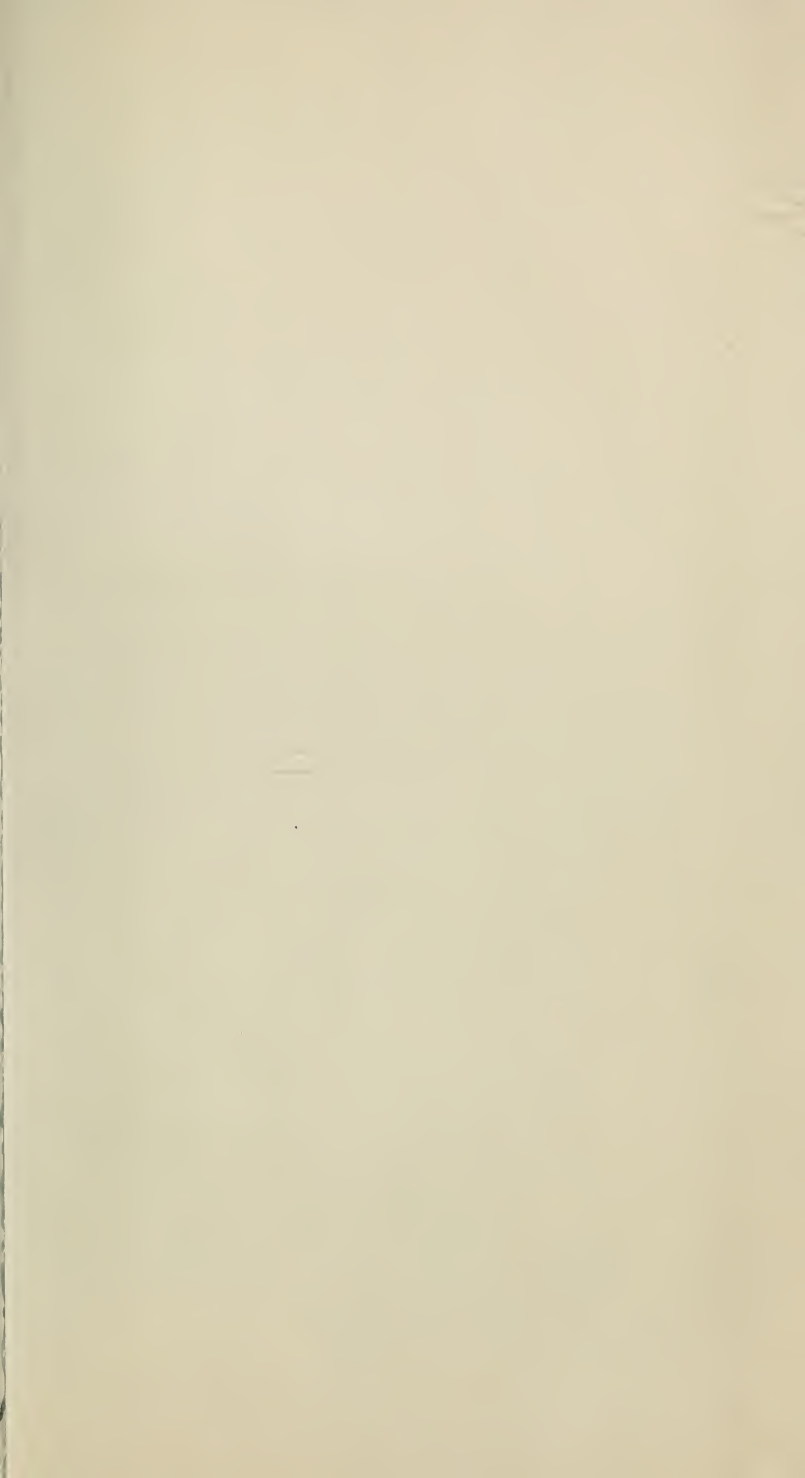
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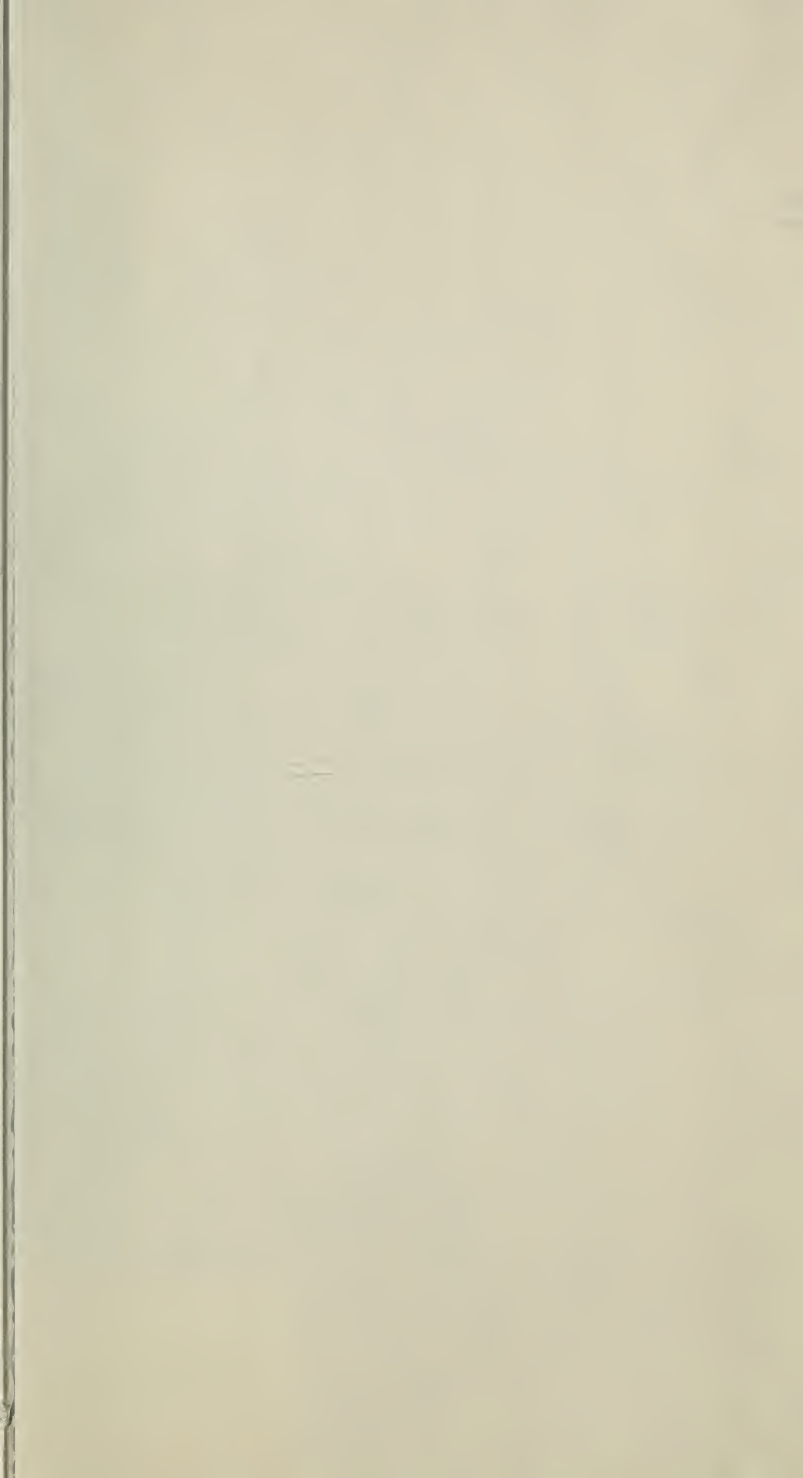
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